History of Islamic Philosophy

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Contents

PART TWO

From the Death of Averroes to the Present Day

Transcription

All Arabic words and proper names have been transcribed with diacritical marks according to the Library of Congress system. The Arabic definite article *al-* has generally been omitted, following the Persian convention, when the writer in question wrote chiefly or exclusively in Persian. The Persian v is used in the dynasty Safavid and in place names such as Qazvin and Suhravard.

As in the French original, dates are first given according to the Islamic calendar, followed by the corresponding year of the Christian era.

Foreword

In undertaking the present study I had no predecessor, and a few lines are therefore needed in explanation of its title and structure.

1. First and foremost, we speak of 'Islamic philosophy'—not, as has been customary ever since the Middle Ages, of 'Arab philosophy'. To be sure, the prophet of Islam was an Arab from Arabia; written Arabic is the language of the Quranic Revelation, the liturgical language of Prayer, the language and the conceptual tool employed by Arabs and non-Arabs alike in the construction of one of the most extensive literatures in the world: the literature expressing the culture of Islam. Nevertheless, the meaning of an ethnic designation evolves with the centuries. Today, the term 'Arab', both in common parlance and in official usage, has reference to a specific ethnic, national and political concept, which coincides neither with the religious concept of 'Islam' nor with the boundaries of its universe. The Arab or Arabicized peoples are in fact no more than a tiny fraction of the Islamic world in its entirety. The ecumenism of 'Islam' as a religious concept can be neither transferred to, nor confined within, the limits of a secular ethnic or national concept. This is self-evident to anyone who has lived in a non-Arab Muslim country.

It has been and could be maintained, of course, that the term 'Arab philosophy' is to be understood simply as referring to a philosophy written in the Arabic language, that is to say, in the written Arabic which even in our own day is still the liturgical bond both between the non-Arab members of the Islamic community, and between the different parts of the Arab world, each of which is characterized by its particular Arabic dialect. Unfortunately, this 'linguistic' definition is both inadequate and wide of the mark. In accepting it, we would no longer know where to class Iranian thinkers such as the Ismaili philosopher Nasir-i Khusraw (eleventh century) or Afdal al-Din Kashani (thirteenth century), a pupil of Nasir al-Din Tusi, whose works

are all written in Persian—not to speak of all those who, from Avicenna and al-Suhrawardi down to Mir Damad (seventeenth century), Hadi Sabzavari (nineteenth century) and our contemporaries, write sometimes in Persian and sometimes in Arabic. The Persian language itself has never ceased to play a role as the language of culture (even as a 'liturgical' language among the Ismailis of Pamir, for example). Descartes, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel wrote some of their treatises in Latin, but are not therefore classed as 'Latin' or 'Roman' authors.

In order, therefore, to give a name to the world of thought that forms the subject of this book, we must find a designation which is both broad enough to preserve the spiritual ecumenism of the concept of 'Islam', and at the same time maintains the concept 'Arabic' at the level of prophetic inspiration at which it made its appearance in history with the Quranic Revelation. Without prejudging the opinions or the 'orthodoxy' that call into question the 'Muslim' quality of one or other of our philosophers, we will be speaking of 'Islamic philosophy' as of a philosophy whose development, and whose modalities, are essentially linked to the religious and spiritual fact of Islam: a philosophy whose existence is proof that, contrary to what has been unjustly claimed, canon law *(fiqh)* alone is neither an adequate nor a decisive expression of Islam.

2. It follows that the concept of Islamic philosophy cannot be confined within the schema—long traditional in our handbooks of the history of philosophy—which preserves only the names of the few great thinkers of Islam who were known to medieval scholasticism in Latin translation. Certainly the translation of Arabic works into Latin, at Toledo and in Sicily, was a cultural development of prime importance; but one which is radically incapable of denoting the general orientation which allows one to grasp the meaning and development of philosophical meditation in Islam. It is profoundly untrue to say that this meditation came to an end with the death of Averroes in 1198. Below, at the end of the first chapter of this study, we will attempt to explain what it was that actually came to an end at the time of his death. The work of the philosopher of C6rdoba, translated into Latin, gave Averroism to the West, and this swamped what has been called 'Latin Avicennism'. In the East, and particularly in Iran, Averroism passed unnoticed, and al-Ghazali's critique of philosophy was never regarded as having put an end to the tradition inaugurated by Avicenna.

3. The significance and continuance of philosophical meditation in Islam can be truly grasped only so long as we do not attempt to see it, at any price, as the exact equivalent of what we in the West have for our part called 'philosophy' over the last few centuries. Even the terms *falsafah* and *faylasuf,* which derive from the transcription of the Greek terms and go back to the Peripatetics and neo-Platonists of the first centuries of Islam, are not the exact equivalents of our own concepts of 'philosophy' and 'philosopher'. The clear-cut distinction which exists in the West between 'philosophy' and 'theology' goes back to medieval scholasticism, and it presupposes a process of 'secularization' the idea of which could not exist in Islam, primarily because Islam has never experienced the phenomenon of the Church, with all its implications and consequences.

As the ensuing pages will make clear, the term *hikmah* is the equivalent of the Greek *sophia,* and the term *hikmat ilahlyah* is the literal equivalent of the Greek *theosophia.* Metaphysics is generally defined as being concerned with the il*ahiyat,* the *Divinalia.* The term *'ilm ilahi (scientia divina)* cannot and should not be translated by the word *theodicy.* Muslim historians, from al-Shahrastani in the twelfth century to Qutb-al-Din Ashkivari in the seventeenth, take the view that the wisdom of the 'Greek sages' was itself also derived from the 'Cave of the lights of prophecy'. Hence if we merely transpose to Islam the question of the relationship between philosophy and religion as this has been traditionally established in the West, our enquiry is lopsided, because then we take into account only one aspect of the situation. To be sure, philosophy in Islam has confronted more than one difficult situation, but the difficulties were not the same as those confronted in the Christian world. Philosophical enquiry *(tahqiq)* in Islam was most 'at home' where the object of meditation was the fundamental fact of prophecy and of the prophetic Revelation, with the *hermeneutical* problems and situation that this fact implies. Thus philosophy assumes the form of 'prophetic philosophy'. This is why, in the present study, pride of place is given to the two main aspects of Shiite prophetic philosophy: Twelver Imamism, and Ismailism. Recent research concerning both of these has not yet been condensed into a study of this type. Our information has been obtained not from the 'heresiographers', but directly from the sources.

Correspondingly, it is not possible to speak of *hikmah* in Islam

without speaking of mysticism—without speaking, that is to say, of Sufism both from the point of view of its spiritual experience and from mat of its speculative theosophy, which has its roots in Shiite esotericism. As we shall see, al-Suhrawardi and, after him, the whole school *of ishraqiyun* directed their efforts to uniting philosophical enquiry with personal spiritual realization. In Islam above all, the history of philosophy and the history of spirituality are inseparable.

4. As regards the present study, we have been constrained to keep within narrow limits. It has proved impossible to devote to the explanation of certain problems, encountered among certain thinkers, all the consideration which they demand. Nevertheless, as we are dealing mainly with doctrines that are very little known, if not entirely unknown, and as the following pages are addressed not just to the Orientalist but to the philosopher in general, we could not merely allude to things or confine ourselves to dictionary references. We trust that the necessary minimum has been said.

Needless to say, the epochs in the history of Islamic philosophy cannot, save by a verbal artifice, be subjected to our usual system of dividing the history of philosophy—and history in general—into three periods which we call Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times. It would be equally inappropriate to say that the Middle Ages have continued down to our day, for the very notion of the Middle Ages presupposes a vision of history thematized according to a particular perspective. There are ways more serious and lasting whereby to define a 'type of thinking' than mere chronological references, and in Islam certain distinct types of thought have persisted from the beginning down to our time. Furthermore, among our Islamic thinkers the question of division into periods has been concretized in a form that corresponds to their own particular perspective—a form not unrelated to their representation of the cycles of prophecy. Qutb al-Din Ashkivari, for example, divides his history of thinkers and spiritual men into three great cycles: the thinkers prior to Islam, the thinkers of Sunni Islam, and the thinkers of Shiite Islam. And we in our turn cannot impose upon them a chronological schema imported from a foreign world. We have consequently distinguished between the following three periods:

(a) The first period takes us from the beginning up to the death of Averroes (595/1198). In some respects, this period has remained to

date the least insufficiently known. When we reach its term we will explain what has determined the choice of such a demarcation. With Averroes, something came to an end in Western Islam. At the same time, with al-Suhrawardi and Ibn al-'Arabi, something began which was to continue in the East down to the present day.

Even with regard to this period we have had to focus attention on many features which have come to light only during the last twenty years of research. But the limits imposed upon us, and the consequent need to find the minimum framework within which a philosophical exposition could still be coherent, forced us to stay within the bounds of this first period, which forms the first part of the present study.

(b) The second period extends over the three centuries preceding the Safavid Renaissance in Islam. It is characterized mainly by what it is convenient to call the 'Sufi metaphysic': the growth of the school of Ibn al-'Arabi and of the school deriving from Najm al-Din al-Kubra, the merging—after the Mongol destruction of Alamut in 1256—of Sufism with Twelver Shiism on the one hand and with reformed Ismailism on the other.

(c) This brings us to the third period. Whereas, in the rest of Islam, philosophical enquiry from the time of Averroes is reduced to silence (a fact which motivates the summary judgement we repudiated above), the Safavid Renaissance in the sixteenth century produced an extraordinary flowering of thought and thinkers in Iran, the effects of which were to extend throughout the Qajar period up to our own time. We will have occasion to analyse the reasons why this phenomenon should have made its appearance in Iran in particular, and in a Shiite milieu. These reasons, and the more recent appearance of other schools elsewhere in Islam, will enable us to look ahead into the near future.

Inevitably, the first part of this study contains references to several thinkers of the second and third periods. How, for example, can one determine the essence of Shiite thought, as set forth by the teachings of the Shiite Imams during the first three centuries of the Hijrah, without reference to the philosophers who were later the commentators on these teachings? A detailed study of these thinkers of the second and third periods will be undertaken in the second and third parts of this work.

Two dear friends, one of them an Iranian Shiite and the other a Sunni

Arab from Syria, have helped me to complete the first part of the study by supplying me with invaluable material for several of the paragraphs of the eight chapters—material which has been jointly inserted here. They are Mr Seyyed Hossein Nasr, professor in the Faculte des Lettres at Tehran University, and Mr Osman Yahya, research lecturer at the C.N.R.S. The three of us share a deep affinity of view with regard to what constitutes the essence of spiritual Islam. The following pages, I believe, bear witness to this.

Tehran,
November 1962

I
From the Beginning Down to the Death of Averroes (595/1198)

I. The Sources of Philosophical Meditation in Islam

1. SPIRITUAL EXEGESIS OF THE QURAN

1. It is commonly said in the West that the Quran contains nothing of a mystical or philosophical nature, and that philosophers and mystics are not indebted to it in any way. Our concern here is not to argue about what Westerners find or fail to find in the Quran, but to know what it is that Muslims themselves have actually discovered in it.

Islamic philosophy may be seen, first and foremost, as the work of thinkers belonging to a religious community characterized by the Quranic expression *ahl al-kitab:* a people in possession of a sacred Book, a people whose religion in founded on a Book that 'came down from Heaven', is revealed to a prophet and is taught to the people by that prophet. Properly speaking, the 'peoples of the Book' are the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims. The Zoroastrians, thanks to the Avesta, have partially benefited from this privilege, while the so-called Sabians of Harran have been less fortunate.

All these communities are faced with the problem of the basic religious phenomenon which is common to them all: the phenomenon of the Sacred Book, the law of life within this world and guide beyond it. The first and last task is to understand the *true meaning of this* Book. But the mode of understanding is conditioned by the mode of being of him who understands; correspondingly, the believer's whole inner ethos derives from his mode of understanding. The lived situation is essentially *hermeneutical*, a situation, that is to say, in which the *true meaning* dawns on the believer and confers reality upon his existence. This true meaning, correlative to true being—truth which is real and reality which is true—is what is expressed in one of the key terms in the vocabulary of philosophy: the word h*aqiqah.*

The term designates, among many other things, the *true meaning* of the divine Revelations: a meaning which, because it is the *truth* of these Revelations, is also their *essence,* and therefore their *spiritual meaning.* One could thus say that the phenomenon of the 'revealed sacred Book' entails a particular anthropology, even a certain definite spiritual culture, and that it postulates, at the same time as it stimulates and orientates, a certain type of philosophy. Both Christianity and Islam are faced with somewhat similar problems when searching for the *true meaning,* the *spiritual meaning,* in, respectively, the hermeneutic of the Bible and the hermeneutic of the Quran. There are also, however, profound differences between them. The analogies and the differences will be analysed and expressed here in terms of structure.

To say that the goal to be attained is the spiritual meaning implies that there is a meaning which is not the spiritual meaning, and that between the two there may be a whole scale of levels, and that consequently there may even be a plurality of spiritual meanings. Everything depends therefore on the initial act of consciousness which establishes a perspective, together with the laws that will henceforth govern it. The act whereby consciousness reveals to itself this hermeneutical perspective, at the same time reveals to it the world that it will have to organize and structure on a hierarchic basis. From this point of view, the phenomenon of the sacred Book has given rise to corresponding structures in the Christian and Islamic worlds. On the other hand, to the extent that the mode of approach to the *true meaning* differs in the two worlds, so they have been faced with differing situations and difficulties.

2. The first thing to note is the absence in Islam of the phenomenon of the Church. Just as Islam has no clergy which is in possession of the 'means of grace', so it has no dogmatic magisterium, no pontifical authority, no Council which is responsible for defining dogma. In Christianity, from the second century onwards, prophetic inspiration and, in a more general way, the freedom of a spiritual hermeneutic, were replaced by the dogmatic magisterium of the Church. Furthermore, the birth and spread of the Christian consciousness essentially signalled the awakening and growth of a *historical consciousness.* Christian thought is centred on the event which occurred in year one of the Christian era: the divine Incarnation marks the entry of God into history. As a result, the religious consciousness is focused with

ever-increasing attention on the *historical* meaning, which it identifies with the literal meaning, the true meaning of the Scriptures.

The famous theory of the *four levels of meaning was* of course to be developed. The classic formula of this theory is as follows: *littera (sensus historicus) gesta docet; quid credas, allegoria; moralis, quid agas; quid speras, anagogia.* However, it requires a great deal of courage today to invalidate, in the name of a spiritual interpretation, conclusions drawn from archaeological and historical evidence. The question is a very complex one, and we barely touch on it here. Yet we should ask ourselves to what extent the phenomenon of the Church, in its official forms at any rate, can ally itself with the predominance of the literal and historical meaning. Moreover, hand in hand with this predominance goes a decadence which results in confusing symbol with allegory. As a consequence, the search for spiritual meaning is regarded as a matter of allegorization, whereas it is a matter of something quite different. Allegory is harmless, but spiritual meaning can be revolutionary.Thus spiritual hermeneutics has been perpetuated and renewed by spiritual groups which have formed on the fringes of the Churches. There is similarity in the way in which a Boehme or a Swedenborg understands Genesis, Exodus or Revelation, and the way in which the Shiites, Ismaili as well as Twelver, or else the Sufi theosophers of the school of Ibn al-'Arabi, understand the Quran and the *corpus* of the traditions explaining it. This similarity is a perspective in which the universe is seen as possessing several levels, as consisting of a plurality of worlds that all *symbolize* with each other.

The religious consciousness of Islam is centred not on a historical fact, but on a fact which is *meta-historical.* not post-historical, but trans-historical. This primordial fact, anterior to our empirical history, is expressed in the divine question which the human Spirits were required to answer before they were placed in the terrestrial world: 'Am I not your Lord?' (Quran 7:172). The shout of joy which greeted this question concluded an eternal pact of fidelity; and from epoch to epoch, all the prophets whose succession forms the 'cycle of prophecy' have come to remind men of their fidelity to this pact. From the pronouncements of the prophets comes the letter of the positive religions: the divine Law or *shari'ah.* The question then is: are we to remain at this literal level of things? If we are, philosophers have no further part to play. Or should we try to grasp the *true meaning*, the

spiritual meaning, the *haqiqah?*

The famous philosopher Nasir-i Khusraw (fifth/eleventh century), one of the great figures of Iranian Ismailism, explains the situation succinctly: 'Positive religion *(shari'ah)* is the exoteric aspect of the Idea *(haqiqah),* and the Idea is the esoteric aspect of positive religion... Positive religion is the symbol *(mithal);* the Idea is that which is symbolized *(mamthul).* The exoteric aspect is in perpetual flux with the cycles and epochs of the world; the esoteric aspect is a divine Energy which is not subject to becoming.'

3. The *haqiqah,* as such, cannot be defined in the way that dogmas are defined by a Magisterium. But Guides and Initiators are needed in order to lead one towards it. Prophecy itself has come to an end: there will be no other prophet. The question that arises is then: how does the religious history of humanity continue *after* the 'Seal of the prophets'? This question, and the answer to it, are essentially what constitutes the religious phenomenon of *Shiite* Islam, which is founded on a prophetology amplifying into an Imamology. This is why we begin this study by stressing the 'prophetic philosophy' of *Shiism.* One of its premisses is the polarity between *shari'ah* and *haqiqah;* its mission is the continuation and protection of the spiritual meaning of the divine Revelations, that is to say, their hidden, esoteric meaning. The existence of a spiritual Islam depends on this protection. Without it, Islam will succumb, in its own manner, to the process which in Christianity has secularized theological systems into political and social ideologies—has secularized theological messianism, for example, into social messianism.

It is true that in Islam the threat is present under different conditions. So far, no philosopher has analysed these conditions in any depth. The Shiite factor has been almost entirely neglected, even though the fate of philosophy in Islam and, as a consequence, the significance of Sufism, cannot be studied independently of the significance of Shiism. Where Ismaili Shiism is concerned, Islamic gnosis, with its great themes and its vocabulary, was already in existence before the philosopher Avicenna was even born.

Because it has not had to confront the problems raised by what we call the 'historical consciousness', philosophical thought in Islam moves in two counter yet complementary directions: issuing from the Origin *(mabda'),* and returning *[ma'ad)* to the Origin, issue and return

both taking place in a *vertical* dimension. Forms are thought of as being in space rather than in time. Our thinkers perceive the world not as 'evolving' in a horizontal and rectilinear direction, but as ascending: the past is not behind us but 'beneath our feet'. From this axis stem the *meanings* of the divine Revelations, each of these meanings corresponding to a spiritual hierarchy, to a level of the universe that issues from the threshold of metahistory. Thought can move freely, unhindered by the prohibitions of a dogmatic authority. On the other hand, it must confront the *shari'ah,* should the *shari'ah* at any time repudiate the *haqiqah.* The repudiation of these ascending perspectives is characteristic of the literalists of legalistic religion, the doctors of the Law.

Yet it was not the philosophers who were initially responsible for the drama. The drama began on the very day following the Prophet's death. All the teachings of the Shiite Imams, which have come down to us in a massive *corpus,* enable us to trace this drama, and to understand how and why it was that in sixteenth-century Safavid Iran philosophy underwent a magnificent renaissance in a Shiite environment.

Throughout the centuries, too, the guiding ideas of Shiite prophetology are always present. They give rise to many themes: the affirmation of the identity of the Angel of Knowledge (*'aql fa"al,* the active Intelligence) with the Angel of Revelation *(ruh al-quds,* the Holy Spirit or Angel Gabriel); the theme of prophetic knowledge in the gnosiology of al-Farabi and Avicenna; the idea that the wisdom of the Greek sages also derives from the 'Cave of the lights of prophecy'; even the idea of the *hikmat ilahlyah* which, etymologically speaking, is equivalent to *theosophia,* not to theology or to philosophy in the sense we assign to these words. Indeed, the separation of philosophy from theology, which goes back in the West to Latin scholasticism, is the first sign of the 'metaphysical secularization' that results in a split between belief and knowledge and culminates in the idea of the 'double truth' professed, if not by Averroes, then at least by a kind of Averroism. Yet this Averroism cut itself off from the prophetic philosophy of Islam. That is why it exhausted itself. It is also why it was so long thought to be the last word in Islamic philosophy, when it was merely a dead end, an episode ignored by the thinkers of Eastern Islam.

4. We will confine ourselves here to a few texts in which the teaching of the Shiite Imams allows us to perceive how Quranic hermeneutic

and philosophical meditation were called upon to 'substantiate' each other. There is, for example, a statement made by the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765): 'The Book of God comprises four things: the statement set down (*'ibarah),* the implied purport *(isharah),* the hidden meanings, relating to the supra-sensible world *(lata'if),* and the exalted spiritual doctrines *(haqa'iq).* The literal statement is for the ordinary believers {*'awamm).* The implied purport is the concern of the e1ite *(khawass).* The hidden meanings pertain to the Friends of God *(awliya';* see below). The exalted spiritual doctrines are the province of the prophets *(anbiya',* plural of *nabi).'* Or, as another explanation has it: the literal statement is addressed to the hearing, the allusion to the spiritual understanding, the hidden meanings are directed to the contemplative vision, and the exalted doctrines concern the realization of an integral spiritual Islam.

These remarks echo the statement of the first Imam, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 40/661): 'There is no Quranic verse which does not possess four types of meaning: exoteric *(zahir),* esoteric *(batin),* limit *(hadd),* divine plan *(muttala').* The exoteric is for oral recitation; the esoteric is for the inner understanding; the limit consists of the statements laying down what things are permissible and what forbidden; the divine plan is that which God intends to realize within man by means of each verse.'

These four types of meaning are equal in number to the levels of meaning defined by the Latin formula quoted above. Nevertheless, something else can already be sensed: the types of meaning are differentiated in accordance with a spiritual hierarchy among men, the gradations of which are determined by their inner capacities. The Imam Ja'far also refers to seven modalities of the 'descent' (the revelation) of the Quran, and goes on to define nine possible ways in which Quranic text may be read and understood. This esotericism is not, therefore, a later construct, since it is essential to the teaching of the Imams and indeed stems from it.

Consonant with the first Imam, and with reference to a Quranic verse 65:12, which concerns the creation of the Seven Heavens and the Seven Earths, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, one of the Prophet's most famous companions, cried out one day in the midst of a large number of people gathered on Mount Arafat (twelve miles away from Mecca): 'O men! if I were to comment upon this verse in your presence as I heard the Prophet himself comment upon it, you would stone me.' This observation perfectly describes the position of esoteric Islam *vis-a-vis* legalistic, literalist Islam, and will help us to understand the account given below of Shiite prophetology.

For the *hadith,* or tradition, which is as it were the charter of all esotericists, goes back to the Prophet himself: "The Quran possesses an external appearance and a hidden depth, an exoteric meaning and an esoteric meaning. This esoteric meaning in turn conceals an esoteric meaning (this depth possesses a depth, after the image of the celestial Spheres which are enclosed within each other). So it goes on for seven esoteric meanings (seven depths of hidden depth).' This *hadith* is fundamental to Shiism, as it was later to be fundamental to Sufism, and to try and explain it involves the whole doctrine of Shiism. The *ta'lim*—the initiatic function with which the Imam is invested—is not to be compared to the magisterium of ecclesiastic authority in Christianity. The Imam, as a 'man of God', is inspired; the *ta'lim* relates essentially to the *haqa'iq* (plural of *haqiqah),* that is to say to the esoteric aspect *(batin).* Finally, the coming of twelfth Imam (the Mahdi, the hidden, awaited Imam), at the end of our Aion, will bring with it the full revelation of the esoteric aspect of all the divine Revelations.

5. The idea of an esoteric aspect which is at the root of Shiism, and an inherent part of it, is seminal outside spheres that are properly speaking Shiite (a fact which, as we will see, gives rise to more than one problem). It is seminal among the mystics—the Sufis—and among the philosophers. Mystical interiorization, by means of Quranic recitation, conduces to the renewal of the mystery of its original Enunciation. But this is certainly not a Sufi innovation. The Imam Ja'far, on the occasion when his disciples had respected the long ecstatic silence which prolonged the canonical prayer *(salah),* explained: 'I did not stop repeating that verse until I heard it spoken by him (the Angel) who uttered it for the Prophet.'

It must be said, then, that the most ancient spiritual commentary on the Quran consists of the teachings which the Shiite Imams propounded in the course of their conversations with their disciples. It was the principles of their spiritual hermeneutics that were subsequently to be brought together by the Sufis. The texts, cited above, of the first and sixth Imams figure prominently in the preface to the great mystical commentary by Ruzbihan al-Baqli of Shiraz (d. 606/1209), in which he assembles, apart from the testimony of his

own personal meditations, that of his predecessors al-Junayd, al-Sulami, and so on. In the sixth/twelfth century Rashid al-Din al-Maybudi (d. 520/1126) composed a monumental commentary in Persian which includes the *tafsir* and the mystical *ta'wil.* These, together with the commentary (the *Ta'wilat)* composed by 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani, a distinguished representative of the school of Ibn al-'Arabi, are three of the most famous *'irfani* commentaries—commentaries, that is, which explain the *mystical gnosis* of the Quran.

A whole work, unfortunately anonymous (dating from 731/1331), is devoted to the *hadith* of the 'seven esoteric meanings'; and it shows that these meanings correspond to the gradations according to which the devout are differentiated, because each of these levels of significance corresponds to a mode of being, to an inner state. It is in conformity with these seven meanings which correspond to seven spiritual levels that al-Simnani (d. 736/1336) organized his own commentary.

Furthermore, many philosophers and mystics, without commenting on the entire Quran, have meditated on the *haqiqah* of one Surah or even of one favourite verse (the verse of the Light, the verse of the Throne, and so on). Their meditations constitute a considerable body of literature. In this manner Avicenna wrote a *tafsir of* several verses. By way of example, we will cite the opening of his commentary on Surah 113 (the penultimate Surah of the Quran): 'I seek refuge in the Lord of Day break (verse 1). This means: I seek refuge with him who shatters the darkness of non-being with the light of being, and who is the primordial Principle, the Being who is necessary of himself. And this (burst of light), as inhering in his absolute goodness, resides as primal intention in his very ipseity. The first of the beings who emanate from him—the first Intelligence—is its Emanation. Evil does not exist in it, other than that which is occulted beneath the outspreading light of the First Being—the opacity, that is to say, inherent in the quiddity which proceeds from its essence.' These few lines suffice to show how and why spiritual exegesis of the Quran must be included among the sources of philosophical meditation in Islam.

We can only cite a few more typical examples here (an inventory of the philosophical and mystical *tafsir* has yet to be taken). The monumental work of Mulla Sadra of Shiraz (d. 1050/1640) includes a *tafsir* of Shiite gnosis which, notwithstanding the fact that it is concerned with only a few Surahs of the Quran, takes up no less than

seven hundred folio pages. Sayyid Ahmad al-'Alawi, one of his contemporaries and, like him, a pupil of Mir Damad, wrote a philosophical *tafsir* in Persian, which is still in manuscript form. Abu al-Hasan' Amili al-Isfahani (d. 1138/1726) compiled a summa of *ta'wil (Mir'at al-Anwar,* the Mirror of Lights) which are veritable prolegomena to any hermeneutic of the Quran according to Shiite gnosis. The Shaykhi school has likewise produced a good number of 'irfani commentaries on isolated Surahs and verses. One should also note the great commentary written in our time, in Iran, by Shaykh Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Ja'far al-Kashfi, another Shiite theosopher, undertook to define the task and function of the spiritual hermeneutic. He shows that the typical hermeneutic comprises three stages: the *tafsir,* the *ta'wil* and the *tafhim.* The *tafsir,* strictly speaking, is the literal exegesis of the letter; its pivot is the canonical Islamic sciences. The ta'wil (etymologically speaking, this means to 'lead back' or to 'bring back' something to its origin, to its *asl* or archetype) is a science whose pivot is a spiritual direction and a divine inspiration. This is the stage reached by moderately advanced philosophers. Finally, the *tafhim* (literally, to 'enable to understand', the highest hermeneutic of all) is a science whose pivot is an act of Understanding on the part of God, an inspiration *(ilham)* of which God is simultaneously the subject, the object and the end, or the source, the organ and the goal. This is the highest stage of philosophy. Our author—and it is this which is of interest—establishes a hierarchy of the philosophical schools in conformity with these stages of Understanding, which themselves are determined by the spiritual hermeneutic of the Quran that each stage represents. The science of *tafsir* does not comprise a philosophy: in relation to the *haqiqah* it corresponds to the philosophy of the Peripatetics. The science of *ta'wil is* the philosophy of the Stoics *(hikmat al-Riwaq)* because it is a science of what is behind the Veil *(hijab, rawaq*; the Islamic conception of Stoic philosophy is a theme that has yet to be investigated). The science of *tafhim,* or transcendental hermeneutics, is the 'oriental science' *(hikmat al-ishraq* or *hikmah mashriqiyah),* that is to say, the science of al-Suhrawardi and of Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi.

6. The anonymous work cited above (sect. 5) helps us to grasp the actual working of this hermeneutic, whose laws were formulated by

the Shiite Imams from the beginning. The questions it sets out to answer are these: what is represented by the text, revealed in a particular language at a particular moment, in relation to the eternal truth which it sets forth? And how is one to picture to oneself the process of this Revelation?

The context within which the mystical theosopher—the *'irfani* philosopher—ponders these questions enables us to understand how he must have viewed the fierce controversy, aroused by the doctrine of the Mu'tazilites, which embroiled the Islamic community in the third/ninth century: is the Quran created or uncreated? For the Mu'tazilite theologians, the Quran is created (see below, ch. HI, 2, B), and this doctrine was imposed in 833 CE, by the caliph al-Ma'mun. There followed a period during which the 'orthodox' were distressingly harassed until, some fifteen years later, the caliph al-Mutawakkil reversed the situation in their favour. For the mystical theosopher, the question is an artificial one, or one that is wrongly framed. The two terms of the alternative—created or uncreated—do not correspond to the same level of reality, and everything depends on the ability to perceive the true relationship between them: the Word of God, and the human word. Unfortunately, neither the official authority in favouring one meaning over another, nor the dialectical theologians involved, had sufficient philosophical reserves at their disposal to overcome the problem. All the labours of the great theologian Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari culminate in a recourse to faith 'without asking how'.

Uneasy as the *'irfani* philosopher may be in the company of the theologians of the *kalam* (see below, ch. III), he is no less so in the company of the Western philosopher or critic. When the latter tries to persuade him to give up the spiritual *hermeneutic* in favour of historical *critique*, he is actually attempting to draw him into a territory which is alien to him, to impose upon him a perspective derived from premisses which, while they are certainly those of modern Western philosophy, are entirely foreign to his own. Typical of this perspective is the attempt to understand the Prophet through his circumstances, education and type of genius; or the attempt to subjugate philosophy to history by asking: how is truth historical, and how is history truth?

To the first of these attempts the *'irfani* philosopher opposes what is in essence the gnosiology of his prophetology, for by means of this gnosiology he can understand how the divine Word passes into its

human expression. The *'irfani* hermeneutic seeks to comprehend the position of the prophets—and of the Prophet of Islam in particular—by meditating on the modality of his relationship not with 'his own time', but with the eternal source from which his message emanates, the Revelation whose text he utters. To the attempt to subjugate philosophy to history—the dilemma in which historicism is trapped— *'irfani* philosophy opposes the understanding that the eternal essence or *haqiqah* of the Quran is the Logos, the divine Word (*kalam al-haqq)*, that endures forever with and through the divine Ipseity and is indivisible from it, with neither beginning nor end in eternity.

It will doubtless be objected that if this is the case, all events are eternal. But if so, what becomes of the concept of event? How, without lapsing into absurdity, are we to understand, for instance, the doings and sayings related of Abraham and Moses before Abraham and Moses have come into existence? Our author replies that this type of objection is based on a mode of representation which is totally illusory. Similarly, his contemporary al-Simnani makes a technical distinction, basing himself on the Quranic verse 41:53, between the *zaman afaqi*, which is the time of the objective world, the quantitative, homogeneous and continuous time of external history, and the *zaman anfusi*, the inner time of the soul, qualitative and pure. The *before* and the after possess an altogether different significance according to whether they are applied to one or other of these times: there are events which are perfectly *real* without having the reality of events in empirical history. Again, Sayyid Ahmad al-'Alawi (eleventh/seventeenth century), to whom we have already referred, confronts the same problem, and attains the perception of an eternal structure in which the order of the succession of forms is replaced by the order to their simultaneity. Time becomes space. Our thinkers prefer to perceive forms in space rather than in time.

7. These considerations throw light on the technique of *Understanding* which is postulated by the exegesis of the *spiritual meaning*, a technique designated *par excellence* by the term *ta'wil.* The Shiites in general, and the Ismailis in particular, were destined to be the great masters of *ta'wil from* the beginning. The more we admit that the processes Of *ta'wil* are foreign to our current habits of thought, the more it deserves our attention. There is nothing artificial about it when it is envisaged at part and parcel of its own world-scheme.

The word *ta'wil,* together with the word *tanzil,* constitute a pair of terms and concepts which are complementary and contrasting. Properly speaking, *tanzil* designates positive religion, the letter of the Revelation dictated by the Angel to the Prophet. It means *to cause this Revelation to descend from* the higher world. Conversely, *ta'wil* means *to cause to return,* to lead back to the origin, and thus to return to the true and original meaning of a written text. 'It is to *cause something to arrive* at its origin. He who practises *ta'wil,* therefore, is someone who diverts what is proclaimed from its external appearance (its exoteric aspect or *zahir),* and makes it revert to its truth, its *haqiqah'* (*cf.* *Kalam-i Pir).* This is *ta'wil* as an inner spiritual exegesis, an exegesis which is symbolic, esoteric and so on. Underlying the idea of exegesis is the idea of the Guide (the *exegete,* the Imam of Shiism), and in the idea of *exegesis* we may perceive the idea of an *exodus,* of a 'flight out of Egypt': an exodus out of metaphor and enslavement to the letter, out of *exile and* the *Occident* of the exoteric appearance, towards the *Orient* of the original, hidden idea.

In Ismaili gnosis, fulfilment of the *ta'wil* is inseparable from a spiritual rebirth (*wiladah ruhaniyah).* Exegesis of a text goes hand in hand with *exegesis* of the soul, a practice known in Ismaili gnosis as the science of the Balance *(mizan).* Viewed from this standpoint, the alchemical method of Jabir ibn Hayyan is simply one case of the application of the *ta'wil,* of occulting the manifest and manifesting the occulted (cf. ch. IV, 2). Other pairs of terms make up the key words of this vocabulary. *Majaz is* the figure of metaphor, while *haqiqah is* the truth that is real, the reality that is true. Thus, it is not the spiritual meaning to be extracted that constitutes the metaphor; it is the *letter* itself which is the metaphor of Idea. *Zahir* is the exoteric aspect, the visible, the literal fact, the Law, the material text of the Quran. *Batin* is the hidden, the esoteric aspect. This polarity is beautifully expressed in Nasir-i Khusraw's text, cited above.

In short, in the following three pairs of terms (which it is best to set down in Arabic, since they have several English equivalents), *shari'ah* is to *haqiqah, zahir* to *batin,* and *tanzil to ta'wil,* in the same relationship as the symbol is to that which is symbolized. This strict correspondence should guard against the unfortunate confusion of symbol with allegory which we have already decried above. Allegory is a more or less artificial representation of generalities and abstractions

which can be perfectly well grasped and expressed in other ways. Symbol is the only possible expression of that which is symbolized, that is to say of the thing signified *with which* it symbolizes. It can never be deciphered once for all. Symbolic perception effects a transmutation of the immediate data (the sensible and literal data), and renders them transparent. In the absence of the transparency brought about in this manner, it is impossible to pass from one level to another. Equally, without a plurality of universes rising above each other in an ascending perspective, symbolic exegesis perishes for lack of function and meaning. That this is so has already been indicated. Such an exegesis therefore presupposes a theosophy in which the worlds symbolize with each other: the supra-sensible and spiritual universes, the macrocosm or *Homo maximus (insan kabir)* and the microcosm. This philosophy of 'symbolic forms' has been impressively developed not only by Ismaili theosophy but also by Mulla Sadra and his school.

It must be added that the way of thought to which *ta'wil* gives rise, and the mode of perception that it presupposes, correspond to a general type of philosophy and spiritual culture. *Ta'wil* activates the imaginative awareness, the exalted function and noetic value of which are forcefully demonstrated, as we shall see, by the *ishraqiyun* philosophers and by Mulla Sadra in particular. It is not the Quran alone, and, in another context, the Bible, which confront us with the irrefutable fact that for so many readers who study their pages the text possesses meanings other than the sense apparent in the written word. These other meanings are not something artificially 'read into' the text by the spirit, but correspond to an initial perception as irrefutable as the perception of a sound or a colour. The same is true of a great deal of Persian literature, both mystical epics and lyric poetry, starting with the symbolic recitals of al-Suhrawardi, who himself developed the example given by Avicenna. The 'Jasmine of the Devotees of Love' by Ruzbihan of Shiraz testifies from beginning to end to a perception of the prophetic meaning of the beauty of beings, because it spontaneously executes a fundamental and continuous *ta'wil* of sensible forms. Someone who has understood Ruzbihan, and who has understood that allegory is not symbol, will no longer be surprised that so many Iranian readers, for example, see a mystical meaning in the poems of his great compatriot, Hafiz of Shiraz.

These considerations, brief as they are, define the level on which the Quranic text is to be understood, and thereby enable us to see the way in which the Quran contributes to philosophical meditation in Islam. If, in short, Quranic verses have a part to play in philosophical demonstration, this is because gnosiology itself goes hand in hand with prophetology (see below, ch. II), and because the 'metaphysical secularization' which, rooted in Latin scholasticism, took place in the West, did not take place in Islam.

If the 'prophetic' quality of this philosophy is nourished from the Quranic source, its structure derives from a whole past to which it gives new life and direction, and whose essential works were transmitted to it through the labour of several generations of translators.

2. THE TRANSLATIONS

We are dealing here with a cultural phenomenon of major importance. It may be defined as the assimilation by Islam—the new centre of humanity's spiritual life—of all the contributions made by the cultures which preceded it in both the East and the West. A grand arc can be drawn: Islam receives the Greek heritage, comprising both authentic and pseudepigraphic works, and transmits it to the West in the twelfth century, through the labours of the school of translators at Toledo. The scope and consequences of these translations from Greek into Syriac, from Syriac into Arabic, and from Arabic into Latin, may be compared to the scope and consequences of the translations of the Mahayana Buddhist canon from Sanskrit into Chinese, or of the translations from Sanskrit into Persian undertaken in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a consequence of the generous reforms of Shah Akbar.

This task of assimilation was performed on two fronts. First, there was the work of the Syrians themselves, that is to say, the work undertaken by the Aramaean populations in the west and south of the Iranian Sasanid empire. Philosophy and medicine were the chief concerns; but the views of the Nestorians both with regard to Christology and to exegesis (the influence exercised by Origen on the school of Edessa) cannot be ignored when, for instance, one is giving an account of the problems of Shiite Imamology. Second, we have what might be called the Graeco-Oriental tradition in the north and east of the Sasanid empire. Here the focus was mainly on alchemy, astronomy, philosophy and the sciences of Nature, including the 'secret sciences' which were part and parcel of this *Weltanschauung.*

1. In order to understand the part played by the Syrians in initiating Muslim philosophers into Greek philosophy, we must glance at least briefly at the history and vicissitudes of the culture whose language was Syriac.

The famous 'school of the Persians' at Edessa was founded at the time when the emperor Jovian ceded to the Persians the town of Nisibis (where, with the name of Probus, the first translator of Greek philosophical works into Syriac made his appearance). In 489, the Byzantine emperor Zeno closed the school because of its Nestorian tendencies. Those masters and students who remained faithful to Nestorianism took refuge in Nisibis, where they founded a new school which was chiefly a centre for philosophy and theology. In the south of the Iranian empire, moreover, the Sasanid sovereign Khusraw Anushirvan (521 -79) founded a school at Jundi-Shapur, the teachers of which were for the most part Syrians. It was from Jundi-Shapur that the caliph Mansur later summoned the physician Jurjis (George) ibn-Bakhtishu'. If we remember that in 529 Justinian closed the school of philosophy at Athens, and that seven of the last neo-Platonic philosophers took refuge in Iran, we are already in aposition to grasp some of the elements of the philosophical and theological situation in which the Oriental world found itself on the eve of the Hijrah (622).

The name which above all others dominates this period is that of Sergius of Ra's 'Aynah, who died at Constantinople in 536, and who was enormously active during his lifetime. Apart from a number of personal works, this Nestorian priest translated into Syriac a good many of Galen's writings as well as Aristotle's writings on logic. Among the Syrian Monophysite (Jacobite) writers of this period, the memorable names are those of Budh, who translated 'Kalllah and Dimnah' into Syriac; Ahudamah (d. 575); Severus Sibukht (d. 667); Jacob of Edessa (*ca.* 633-708); and George, 'bishop of the Arabs' (d. 724). Apart from Logic (Paul the Persian dedicated a treatise on Logic to the Sasanid sovereign Khusraw Anushirvan), the Syrian writers and translators were chiefly interested in the collections of aphorisms, arranged along the lines of a history of philosophy. Preoccupied as they were with the Platonic doctrine of the soul, they confused the Greek sages, most notably **Plato,** with the **figures of Eastern monks.** This confusion was

surely not without influence on the Islamic notion of the 'Greek prophets' (see above, I, 1, sect. 3)—the notion, that is, that the Greek sages also drew their inspiration from the 'Cave of the lights of prophecy'.

In the light of these Graeco-Syriac translations, the great work of translation undertaken from the beginning of the third century of the Hijrah appears less as an innovation and more as a broader and more methodical development of a task that had previously been pursued with the same preoccupations in mind. Moreover, even before Islam the Arabian peninsula contained a great many Nestorian doctors, almost all of them from Jundi-Shapur.

Baghdad had been founded in 148/765. In 217/832, caliph al-Ma'mun founded the 'House of wisdom' (*Bayt al-hikmat)* and appointed Yuhanna ibn Masawayh (d. 243/857) as its director. The latter was succeeded by one of his students, the famous and prolific Hunayn ibn Ishaq (194/809-260/873), who was born at al—Hirah into a family belonging to the Christian Arab tribe of the 'Ibad Hunayn is certainly the most famous translator of Greek works into -Syriac and Arabic, though mention should also be made of his son, Ishaq ibn Hunayn (d. 910 CE), and his nephew, Hubaysh ibn al-Hasan. There was a centre of translation, with a team translating or adapting mainly from Syriac into Arabic or, much more rarely, from Greek directly into Arabic. All the technical vocabulary of philosophy and theology in the Arabic language was fashioned in this way during the course of the third/ninth century. However, it must not be forgotten that from this point onwards words and concepts possess a life of their own in Arabic. To resort to the Greek dictionary in order to translate the vocabulary used by later thinkers, who themselves were ignorant of Greek, can give rise to misunderstandings.

Other translators of note are Yahya ibn al-Bitriq (begining of the ninth century); 'Abd al-Masih ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Na'imah al-Himsi (that is to say from Emesa, during the first half of the ninth century), who collaborated with the philosopher al-Kindi (see below-, V, 1) and translated Aristotle's *Sophistic Elenchi* and *Physics*, as well as the famous 'Theology' attributed to the same author; and the great Qusta ibn Luqa (born *ca.* 820, died at an advanced age *ca.* 912), a native of Baalbek, the Greek Heliopolis in Syria, of Greek an d Melchite Christian descent. Philosopher, doctor, physician and mathematician,

Qusta translated, among other things, the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias and John Philoponus on Aristotle's *Physics;* partially translated the commentaries on the treatise *Degeneratione et corruptione;* and the treatise by pseudo-Plutarch entitled *Deplacitis philosophorum.* Particularly well-known among his own personal writings is his treatise on the 'Difference between the Soul and the Spirit', as well as some treatises on the occult sciences, in which his explanations are curiously similar to those of the psychotherapists of today.

Distinguished translators in the tenth century include Abu Bishr Matta al-Qunna'i(d. 940), the Christian philosopher Yahya ibn 'Adi(d. 974), and his pupil, Abu al-Khayr ibn al-Khammar (b. 942). But of particular importance is the school of the 'Sabians of Harran', established in the neighbourhood of Edessa. The pseudo-Majriti contains much valuable information about their astral religion. They traced their spiritual line of descent back to Hermes and Agathodaimon, as al-Suhrawardi did later. Their doctrines bring together the ancient astral religion of the Chaldeans, studies in mathematics and astronomy, and neo-Pythagorean and neo-Platonic spirituality. From the eighth to the tenth centuries they produced a number of very active translators, of whom the most famous was Thabit ibn Qurrah *(ca.* 826-901), a great adherent of the astral religion and an outstanding author of mathematical and astronomical works.

We cannot enter here into the details of these translations. There are some of which only the titles remain, such as those mentioned in Ibn al-Nadim's great bibliography of the tenth century; some are still in manuscript form, while others have been edited. Generally speaking, the work of the translators took in the entire Aristotelian *corpus*, including certain commentaries by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius (the opposition between these two commentators Was well known to Islamic philosophers, and is emphasized by Mulla Sadra. Likewise, book *lambda* of the *Metaphysics was* all-important for the theory of the plurality of the celestial Movers). We cannot discuss here the question of what was really known of the authentic Plato, but we may mention the fact that the philosopher al-Farabi (see below, V. 2) gives a remarkable exposition of Plato's philosophy, distinguishing the features of each dialogue successively (see bibliography). he expounds the philosophy of Aristotle in a similar fashion.

What should be stressed is the considerable influence exerted by certain pseudepigraphic works. In the first place there is the famous 'Theology' attributed to Aristotle. This, as we know, is a paraphrase of the last three Enneads of Plotinus, possibly based on a Syriac version dating from the sixth century, an epoch during which neo-Platonism flourished both among the Nestorians and at the Sasanid court. (To this epoch, too, belongs the body of writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite.) The 'Theology' lies at the basis of neo-Platonism in Islam, and it is this which explains the wish on the part of so many philosophers to demonstrate the agreement between Aristotle and Plato. Nevertheless, doubts about this attribution were expressed in several quarters, beginning with Avicenna (see below, V, 4), in those of his 'Notes' which have survived, and in which he also gives precise indications about what was to have been his 'oriental philosophy' {*Notes*, edited by A. Badawi, with some commentaries and treatises by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius, Cairo, 1947). In the famous passage of *Ennead IV*, 8, 1 ('Often, awakening to myself...'}, the mystical philosophers found both the exemplar of the Prophet's celestial assumption *(mi'raj)*, which is reproduced in its turn in the Sufi experience, and the exemplar of the vision which crowns the efforts of the divine Sage, the Stranger, the Solitary. Al-Suhrawardi ascribes the 'ecstatic confession' of the *Enneads* to Plato himself, and its influence can be sensed in Mir Damad (d. 1041/1631). In Iran in the seventeenth century, Qadi Sa'id Qummi devoted yet another commentary to the 'Theology of Aristotle' (see part 3).

The *Liber de Pomo*, in which the dying Aristotle, in the presence of his followers, adopts the teaching of Socrates in the *Phaedo*, had an equally significant destiny *[cf.* the Persian version by Afdal al-Din al-Kashani, a pupil of Nasir al-Din Tusi in the thirteenth century; see part 2). Finally, mention should be made of a book which was also attributed to Aristotle, the 'Book on the pure Good' (translated into Latin in the twelfth century by Gerard of Cremona, with the title *Liber de causis* or *Liber de Aristotelis de expositione bonitatis purae).* This is in fact an extract from the *Elementatio theologica* by the neo-Platonist Proclus. (It has been edited, again by A. Badawi, along with other texts: *De aeternitate mundi*, *Quaestiones naturales*, the *Liber Quartorum* or Book of Tetralogies, an alchemical work attributed to Plato, Cairo, 1955.)

It is impossible to refer here to the pseudo-Platos, pseudo-Plutarchs, pseudo-Ptolemys, pseudo-Pythagorases, who produced a vast body of literature about alchemy, astronomy and the natural properties. In order to acquire an idea of them, one should consult the works of Julius Ruska and Paul Kraus (see below, chapter IV).

2. In fact, it is to Julius Ruska that we owe the refutation of the unilateral concept of things that prevailed for so long. For although the Syrians were the principal transmitters of philosophy and medicine, they were not alone, and there was not just one current flowing from Mesopotamia towards Persia. The influence of the Persian (Iranian) scholars before them at the 'Abbasid court should not be forgotten, most notably in the fields of astronomy and astrology. Similarly, the existence in Persian of a large number of technical terms (for example *naushadar*, meaning ammoniac) suggests that the intermediaries between Greek alchemy and the alchemy of Jabir ibn Hayyan should most probably be sought in the centres of Graeco-Oriental tradition in Iran.

Together with Ibn Masawayh, al-Nawbakhti the Iranian and Masha 'Allah the Jew assumed the initial responsibilities for the school of Baghdad. Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti was director of the library of Baghdad under Harun al-Rashid, and the translator of astrological works from Pahlavi into Arabic. These translations from Pahlavi (or Middle Iranian) into Arabic are of capital importance. (The astrological works of the Babylonian Teukros and the Roman Vettius Valens had been translated into Pahlavi.) One of the most famous of the translators in this field was Ibn al-Muqaffa', an Iranian who had converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam. Also of note are a large number of scholars originating from Tabaristan and Khurasan—in short from north-eastern Iran and from what is called 'outer tan' in central Asia: 'Umar ibn Farrukhan al Tabari, a friend of the Barmecide Yahya; Fadl ibn Sahl al-Sarakhsi, south of Merv; Muhammad ibn Musa al-KhWarizmi, father of the so-called 'Arabic' algebra—whose treatise on algebra dates from around 820—but who is as far from being an Arab as Khiva is from Mecca; Khalid al-MarWarrudhi; Habash al-Marwazi (that is to say, from Merv); Ahmad al-Farghani (the Alfraganus of the Latins during the Middle Ages), who came from Farghana (High Yaxarta); and Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi (the Albumaser of the Latins), who was from Bactria.

The mention of Bactria and the Bactrians, in fact, brings to mind the act of the Barmecides which was responsible for the rise of Iranianism at the 'Abbasid court, and for the leading position which the Iranian family of that name attained in the affairs of the Caliphate (752-804). The name of their ancestor, the *Barmak,* designated the hereditary dignity of the office of high priest in the Buddhist temple of Nawbihar (Sanskrit *nova vihara,* 'nine monasteries') at Balkh, described by later legend as a Temple of Fire. Everything that Balkh, 'mother of cities', had absorbed over the centuries from the various cultures—Greek, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Manichaean, Nestorian Christian—lived on in it; it was destroyed, but rebuilt in 726 by the Barmak. In short, mathematics and astronomy, astrology and alchemy, medicine and mineralogy, and, together with these sciences, an entire pseudepigraphic literature, were centred in the towns which lined the great road to the East, the road taken of old by Alexander.

As we intimated above, the presence of many Iranian technical terms constrains one to seek their origins in the Iranian territories of the north-east, before these were penetrated by Islam. From the middle of the eighth century, astronomers and astrologers, doctors and alchemists, set out from these towns towards the new seat of spiritual life created by Islam. There is an explanation for this phenomenon. All these sciences—alchemy, astrology—were part and parcel of a *Weltanschauung* that the orthodox Christianity of the Great Church sought out only in order to destroy. Conditions in the East differed from those in the Roman Empire, Eastern or Western. As one approached the East, the influence of the Great Church grew progressively less (whence the reception accorded to the Nestorians). What was then at stake was the fate of an entire culture, designated by Spengler as a 'magical culture', to which he added the unfortunate qualification of 'Arab', a definition that is totally inadequate for the matter in hand. Sadly, as Ruska deplored, the horizons of our classical philology halted at a linguistic frontier, without perceiving what both sides of it had in common.

This leads us to observe that although mention has been made of the Syrian translations of the Greek philosophers, and although the scientific contributions of the Iranians in the north-east have been noted, something is still missing. What needs to be added is the phenomenon indicated by the name of *Gnosis.* There is an element

common to Christian gnosis expressed in the Greek language, Jewish gnosis, Islamic gnosis, and Shiite and Ismaili gnosis. What is more, we now have precise information about the presence in Islamic gnosis of traces of Christian and Manichaean gnosis. Finally, we must take into account the persistence of the theosophical doctrines of ancient Zoroastrian Persia, which the genius of al-Suhrawardi (see below, ch. VII) integrated to the structure of *ishraqi* philosophy, and which continue to exist today.

All this throws new light on the situation of Islamic philosophy. In fact, were Islam nothing but the pure legalistic religion of the *shari'ah,* the philosophers would have no role to play and would be irrelevant. This is something they have not failed to recognize over the centuries in the difficulties with the doctors of the Law. If, on the other hand, Islam in the full sense is not merely the legalistic, exoteric religion, but the unveiling, the penetration and the realization of a hidden, esoteric reality *(batin),* then the position of philosophy and of the philosopher acquires an altogether different meaning. We have as yet scarcely even considered this aspect of things. Nevertheless, it is the Ismaili version of Shiism, which is the original gnosis *par excellence* of Islam, that provides us with an adequate definition of the role of philosophy in this situation in an exegesis of the famous *'hadith* of the tomb': philosophy is the tomb in which theology must perish in order to rise again as a *theosophia,* divine wisdom *(hikmat ilahlyah)* or gnosis *('irfan).*

In order to grasp the conditions which made it possible for such a gnosis to survive in Islam, we must go back to what was said in the preceding paragraph about the absence in Islam of the phenomenon of the Church and of an institution like that of the Councils. What the 'gnostics' in Islam acknowledge is fidelity to the 'men of God', to the Imams (the 'Guides'). This fact calls for the inclusion of something unprecedented perhaps in the schema of a history of Islamic philosophy, namely, an account of 'prophetic philosophy' which is both the wholly original form and the spontaneous product of the Islamic consciousness.

An account such as this cannot be segmented. What we give here, therefore, is a sketch of the two principal forms taken by Shiism. And since we can do no better than to ask Shiite thinkers (Haydar Amuli, Mir Damad, Mulla Sadra etc.) to throw light on the doctrinal perspective

of the holy Imams, our account must of necessity incorporate elements from the first to the eleventh century of the Hijrah. But this recourse to such a historical span merely deepens the problem posed in principle from the start.

II. Shiism and Prophetic Philosophy

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

The observations that we have already made concerning the *ta'wil* of the Quran as the fount of philosophical meditation have already indicated that it would be constricting to reduce the schema of speculative and spiritual life in Islam to the Hellenizing philosophers *(falasifah),* to the theologians of the Sunni *kalam,* or to the Sufis. It is astonishing that in the general accounts of Islamic philosophy, no consideration, one might say, has been given to the role and decisive importance of Shiite thinking in the development of Islamic philosophical thought. There have even existed certain reservations or prejudices on the part of orientalists which border on hostility, and which moreover accord perfectly with the ignorance evinced in Sunni Islam concerning the real problems of Shiism. It is no longer possible to invoke the difficulty of gaining access to the texts, since it is already thirty years since some of the great Ismaili texts began to be published. For their part, the Iranian publishers have increased the number of their printings of the great Twelver Shiite texts. The situation calls for some preliminary remarks.

1. Instead of embarking on the study of Shiite theology and philosophy through the great texts, which extend from the traditions of the Imams down to the commentaries written on them over the centuries, scholars have been content to find political and social explanations which relate only to external history, and which aim at deriving and deducing the cause of the Shiite religious phenomenon from something else—in other words, which aim at reducing it to something other than what it is. For no matter how many external circumstances are collated, the sum of them, or their product, will never give the initial religious phenomenon (the *Urphaenomen),* which is as irreducible as the perception of a sound or a colour. Shiism is explained first and last by the Shiite consciousness itself, by the Shiite sense and perception of the world.

The texts going back to the Imams themselves show that what constitutes this consciousness is essentially the desire to attain the *true meaning* of the divine Revelations, because, in the final analysis, the truth of human existence, the meaning of its original and of its future destiny, depend on this *true meaning.* If the question of such a comprehension has been affirmed ever since Islam began, this is precisely because it constitutes the spiritual fact of Shiism. What we must do, therefore, is to single out the great themes of philosophical meditation which Shiite religious consciousness has brought into being.

2. Islam is a prophetic religion. In the preceding pages we have recalled that the distinguishing feature of a 'community of the Book' *(ahl al-kitab)* is the phenomenon of the sacred Book. Essentially, thought is concentrated first and foremost on the God who is revealed in this Book through the message dictated by the Angel to the prophet who receives it. It is concentrated on the unity and the transcendence of this God *(tawhid).* All, whether philosophers or mystics, have fastened onto this theme almost to the point of giddiness. Secondly, thought is concentrated on the person who receives and transmits this message, on the conditions, in short, presupposed by his being in receipt of it. Meditation on these facts leads to a theology and a prophetology, an anthropology and a gnosiology which have no equivalent elsewhere. It is true that the conceptual tools provided by the translations of the Greek philosophers into Arabic {see above, I, 2) influenced the form taken by this meditation. This influence, however, is only partial: the resources of the Arabic language gave rise to problems which were unforeseen in the Greek texts. It must not be forgotten that some great Ismaili works, such as that by Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani, were written well before the time of Avicenna. All the dialectic of the *tawhid* (the double negativity), as well as the problems concerning prophetology, arose from specific data, and were not modelled on the Greek. As a corollary to this, it should be borne in mind that prophetology and the prophetic 'theory of knowledge' are at the summit of the gnosiology of the greatest of the so-called Hellenizing philosophers, the *falasifah* such as al-Farabi and Avicenna.

3. From the very beginning, in fact, Shiite thinking has given sustenance to a prophetic type of philosophy which corresponds to a prophetic religion. A prophetic philosophy presupposes a type of thought which does not allow itself to be bound either by the historical

past, or by the letter of the dogmatic form in which the teachings of this past are consolidated, or by the limits imposed by the resources and laws of rational Logic. Shiite thinking is orientated by its expectation not of the revelation of a new *shari'ah,* but of the plenary Manifestation of all the hidden or spiritual meanings of the divine Revelations. The expectation of this Manifestation is typified in the expectation of the coming of the 'hidden Imam' (the 'Imam of that time', who according to Twelver Shiism is at present hidden). The cycle of prophecy which has been concluded is succeeded by a new cycle, the cycle of the *walayah,* which will end with the coming of the Imam. Prophetic philosophy is essentially eschatological.

The main thrust of Shiite thinking may be designated as, first, the *batin* or esoteric aspect, and, second, the *walayah,* the meaning of which will become clear.

4. We must be aware of all the consequences of the original decisive choice, specified above (I,1), which we have to make when confronted by the following dilemma: is Islamic religion limited to its legalistic and juridical interpretation, to the religion of the law, to the exoteric aspect *(zahir)?* If the answer is in the affirmative, it is pointless even to speak of philosophy. Alternatively, does not this *zahir* or exoteric aspect, which, it is claimed, is sufficient for the regulation of one's behaviour in everyday life, envelop something which is the *batin,* the inner, esoteric aspect? If the answer is yes, the entire meaning of one's everyday behaviour undergoes a modification, because the letter of positive religion, the *shari'ah,* will then possess a meaning only within the *haqiqah,* the spiritual reality, which is the esoteric meaning of the divine Revelations. This esoteric meaning is not something one can construct with the support of Logic or a battery of syllogisms. Neither is it a defensive dialectic such as that found in the *kalam,* for one does not refute symbols. The hidden meaning can be transmitted only by way of a knowledge which is a spiritual heritage (*'ilm irthi);* and this spiritual heritage is represented by the vast *corpus* containing the traditional teachings of the Shiite Imams, the 'heirs' of the prophets. (Al-Majlisi's edition runs to 26 books in 14 volumes in-folio.) When the Shiites, like the Sunnis, use the word *sunnah* (tradition), it is understood that for them this *sunnah* encompasses everything that was taught by the Imams.

Each of the Imams in turn was the 'Keeper of the Book' *(qayyim*

al-Qur'an), explaining and transmitting to his followers the hidden meaning of the Revelations. This instruction is at the heart of Islamic esotericism, and it is paradoxical that Western scholars have studied this esotericism without taking Shiism into account. It is a paradox that has its counterpart in Islam. This is certainly the case in Sunni Islam; but perhaps the initial responsibility for it lies with those who, within the Shiite minority itself, have presumed to ignore or neglect the esoteric teaching of the Imams, to the point of mutilating Shiism itself and of justifying the attempts to see it merely as a fifth ritual form alongside the four great juridical ritual forms of Sunni Islam. All through the centuries, one of the most moving aspects of Shiism has been the struggle of those who, along with the teaching of the Imams, have accepted Shiism in its totality. Such are Haydar Amuli, Mulla Sadra Shirazi, the entire Shaykhi school, and many eminent shaykhs of our day. *(Cf.* in particular part 3 of the present study.)

5. The cycle of prophecy has been concluded: Muhammad was the 'Seal of the prophets' *(khatim al-anbiya'),* the last of those who, prior to him, had given a new *shari'ah* to humanity: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. For Shiism, however, the final phase of prophecy *(nubuwah)* was the initial phase of a new cycle, the cycle of the *walayah* or Imamate. In other words, the necessary complement of prophetology is Imamology, and the most direct expression of Imamology is the *walayah.* It is difficult to find anyone word which will convey all that this term connotes. From the very beginning, it figures largely in the teaching of the Imams themselves. Our texts repeat over and over that 'the *walayah is* the esoteric aspect of prophecy *(batin al-nubuwah)'.* The word actually means *friendship, protection.* The *awliya' Allah (dustan-iKhuda* in Persian) are the 'Friends of God' {and the 'Beloved of God'); strictly speaking, they are the prophets and the Imams, the elite of humanity to whom the divine secrets are revealed through divine inspiration. The 'friendship' with which they are favoured by God makes them the spiritual *Guides* of humanity. It is by responding to them with his own devotion, as a friend, that each of their initiates, under their guidance, arrives at knowledge of himself and shares in their *walayah.* Thus the idea of the *walayah* is, essentially, suggestive of the initiatic and supervisory function of the Imam, initiating his disciples into the mysteries of the doctrine; it embraces, in an inclusive sense, both the idea of knowledge *(ma'rifah)* and the idea of love

(mahabbah)—a knowledge which is by its nature a salvatory knowledge. In this respect, Shiism is truly the *gnosis* of Islam.

The cycle of the *walayah* (henceforth we will use this complex term without translating it) is thus the cycle of the Imam succeeding the Prophet; that is to say, of the *batin* succeeding the *zahir,* the *haqiqah* succeeding the *shari'ah.* There is no question here of dogmatic magisterium. (For Twelver Shiism, the Imam is at present invisible.) In fact, it would be more appropriate to speak of the simultaneity of *shari'ah* and *haqiqah* rather than of their succession, thereby adding the latter to the former. For it is at this point that Shiism divides into two branches. If equilibrium is maintained between *shari'ah* and *haqiqah,* prophecy and the Imamate, and the *batin* is not dissociated from the *zahir,* what emerges is the form of Twelver Shiism, which to a certain extent is also that of Fatimid Ismailism. If the *batin* is carried to the point where it obliterates the *zahir,* and as a result the Imamate takes precedence over prophecy, we get the reformed Ismailism of Alamut. But if the *batin* without the *zahir,* with all the consequences that this entails, is the form taken by ultra-Shiism, the *zahir* without the *batin* is a mutilation of the integrity of Islam, because it involves a literalism which rejects the heritage transmitted by the Prophet to the Imams and which is the *batin.*

So the *batin* or esoteric aspect, as the content of knowledge, and the *walayah,* which configurates the type of spirituality postulated by this knowledge, come together and show Shiism to be the gnosis of Islam, called *'irfan-i shi'i* in Persian: Shiite gnosis or theosophy. Analogous relationships come to mind: the *zahir* is to the *batin* what literal religion (*shari'ah)* is to spiritual religion *(haqiqah),* what prophecy *(nubuwah)* is to the *walayah.* The word *walayah* has often been translated as 'sanctity', and the word *wallas* 'saint'. These terms are used in the West with a precise canonical sense: there is nothing to be gained by creating confusion and disguising what is original on both sides. It would be better, as we have just suggested, to speak of the cycle of the *walayah as* the cycle of spiritual Initiation, and of the *awliya' Allah* as the 'Friends of God' or 'men of God'. From now on, no history of Islamic philosophy will be able to pass over these questions in silence. They are questions that did not receive treatment in the Sunni *kalam* {see below, ch. III) at its inception, because they transcended its limitations. They do not derive from the study of Greek philosophy.

On the other hand, many of the texts going back to the Imams reveal affinities and convergences with the gnosis of antiquity. If one traces the development of the themes of prophetology and Imamology from their origins, it comes as no surprise to find them in the writings of the *falasifah;* above all, one has no right to divorce them from their philosophical thinking on the grounds that they play no part in our own.

6. Developments in the field of Ismaili studies, and the recent research done on Haydar Amuli, a Shiite Sufi theologian who lived in the eighth/fourteenth century, lead us to formulate anew the question of the relationship between Shiism and Sufism—a question of importance, since it dominates the entire perspective of Islamic spirituality. Sufism is, *par excellence,* an attempt to interiorize the Quranic Revelation, a breaking away from purely legalistic religion, with the intention. of relieving the intimate experience undergone by the Prophet on the night of the *Mi'raj.* In short, it is the experience of the condition of the *tawhid,* resulting in the awareness that only God himself can express, through the mouths of those who believe in him, the mystery of his unity. In that they both go beyond the purely juridical interpretation of the *shari'ah,* and both assume the *batin,* Shiism and Sufism would appear to be merely two ways of saying the same thing. In fact, there have been Shiite Sufis from the very beginning: the Kufah group, in which a Shiite by the name of 'Abdak was actually the first to be called a Sufi. In addition, we know that the Sufis were severely rebuked by some of the Imams.

We may well ask ourselves what happened. It would be utterly pointless to oppose, on the grounds that it was purely theoretical, Shiite 'gnosis' to the mystical experience of the Sufis. The concept of the *walayah,* which was formulated by the Imams themselves, would invalidate such an opposition. Yet people have achieved the feat of using the name and the thing without reference to their origins. Furthermore, Islamic esotericism possibly does not contain a single theme which was not mentioned or initiated by the Shiite Imams, in conversations, lessons, sermons, and so on. In this respect, many pages of Ibn al-'Arabi can be read as the work of a Shiite author, although it still remains true that while the concept of the *walayahis* represented in his writings with perfect correctness, the *walayah* itself is cut off from its origins and supports. Haydar Amuli (eighth/fourteenth

century), one of Ibn al-'Arabi's best-known Shiite followers, went into this question in depth.

Since so many texts have been lost, it may long remain a problem to say 'what happened'. Tor Andreae had already realized that, in the theosophy of Sufism, prophetology appeared to involve attributing themes which were properly those of Imamology to the sole person of the Prophet, and that Imamology itself had been eliminated along with everything else that might offend Sunni sentiment (see below, A, 3 and 4, for the *status quaestionis).* That the Sufi notion of the person who is the Pole *(qutb)* and the Pole of Poles, as well as the notion of the *walayah,* have a Shiite origin is something that cannot be denied. Likewise, the readiness with which, after the fall of Alamut, Ismailism assumed (as the Ismailis of Syria had done previously) the 'cloak' of Sufism cannot be explained without reference to a common origin.

If we acknowledge that Sunni Sufism eliminated original Shiism, we have not far to seek for the reasons for the rebuke administered to Sufism by the Imams. On the other hand, in actual fact all traces of Shiite Sufism were not lost: there is even a Sufism, existing in Iran from the time of Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah in the thirteenth century to the present day, which is conscious of being true Shiism. At the same time we also witness the emergence and formulation of aspects of a Shiite gnosis *{'Man)* which employs the technical vocabulary of Sufism; yet its exponents do not belong to a *tariqah* or Sufi congregation. These latter include such figures as Haydar Amuli, Mir Damad, Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi, and many others, as well as the entire Shaykhi school. This type of spirituality develops from al-Suhrawardi's *ishraq,* and combines an inner spiritual asceticism with a rigorous philosophical education.

The reproaches levelled by Shiism at Sufism concern sometimes the organization of the *tariqah* and the fact that the shaikh's role usurps that of the invisible Imam, sometimes the existence of a pious agnosticism conducive both to slothful ignorance and to moral licentiousness. In their turn, these spiritual masters, the guardians of Shiite gnosis (irfan-*i shi'i),* are themselves the objects of attack by the doctors of the Law, who wish to reduce theology to questions of jurisprudence. The complexity of the situation is manifest, and we should take note of it, for we will come back to it in Part Three of this study. The spiritual struggle for a spiritual Islam conducted by the Shiite minority and, with it—albeit in a more sporadic fashion—by the *falasifah* and the

Sufis, against the literalist religion of the Law, is a constant which dominates the entire history of Islamic philosophy. At stake is the protection of what is spiritual from all the perils of socialization.

7. At this point, we must say something about the phases and the exegesis of this struggle, although we will have to restrict ourselves to a few pages. Let us recall that the word *Shiism* (from the Arabic *shi'ah,* meaning a group of initiates) denotes all those who subscribe to the idea of the Imamate, personified by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law by his daughter Fatimah, and by his successors, in their role as inaugurators of the cycle of the *walayah* which comes after the cycle of prophecy (Shiism having been the official religion of Iran for five centuries). The word *Imam* (not to be confused with the word iman, meaning faith) denotes the one who stands or walks in front. He is the *guide.* It is commonly used to mean the person who 'guides' the course of prayer in the mosque; in many cases it means the head of a school. (Plato, for example, is the 'Imam of philosophers'.) From the Shiite point of view, however, this is merely a metaphorical usage of the word. Properly and strictly speaking, the term is applicable only to those members of the House of the Prophet *(ahl al-bayt)* designated as the 'flawless'. In Twelver Shiism, these are the 'Fourteen Most Pure Ones' *(ma'sum),* consisting of the Prophet, his daughter Fatimah, and the Twelve Imams (see below, A, 4).

We can refer here only to the doctrines of the two main branches of Shiism: Twelver Shiism, or simply 'Imamism', and Sevener Shiism or Ismailism. In both cases, the number expresses a conscious symbolism. While Twelver Imamology symbolizes with the Heaven of the *twelve* zodiacal constellations (as with the *twelve* springs which gushed from the rock struck by Moses' rod), the Sevener Imamology of Ismailism symbolizes with the seven planetary Heavens and their wandering stars. A constant rhythm is thereby expressed: each of the six great prophets had his *twelve* Imams, who were homologous with each other (see below, A, 5). In Ismaili gnosis, the number twelve is transferred to the *hujjah* of the Imam. For Twelver Imamism, the 'pleroma of the Twelve' has been achieved. The last of them was and remains the twelfth Imam, the Imam of this time *(sahib al-zaman),* the Imam who is 'hidden from the senses, but present to the heart', present both in the past and in the future. We shall see how the idea of the 'hidden Imam' is *par excellence* expressive of the religion of

the personal, invisible guide.

Up to the time of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765), Twelver and Ismaili Shiites both venerated the same Imamic line. Now, apart from the teachings of the first Imam that have come down to us, the great themes of Shiite gnosis have mainly been constructed around the teachings of the fourth, fifth and sixth Imams, 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin (d. 95/714), Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 115/733), and Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765). Any study of the origins of Shiism cannot therefore dissociate one branch from the other. The immediate cause of their separation was the untimely death of the young Imam Isma'il, whom his father Ja'far al-Sadiq had already invested. The eager initiates who clustered round Isma'il, and who tended to accentuate what has been called ultra-Shiism, allied themselves with his young son, Muhammad ibn Isma'il, and were called Ismailis (from the name of their Imam). Others, however, allied themselves with the new Imam invested by the Imam Ja'far; this was Musa al-Kazim, brother of Isma'il, and the seventh Imam. They transferred their loyalty from Imam to Imam, down to the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, son of the Imam Hasan al-'Askari. He disappeared mysteriously on the very day that his young father died (see below, A, 7). These are the Twelver Shiites.

A. TWELVER SHIISM

1. Periods and sources

There can be no question, here, of establishing a synchronicity between the works which illustrate the developing thought of the two main branches of Shiism, Twelver Shiism and Sevener Shiism. Given the state of research, the time for such an undertaking has not yet arrived. From the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, under 'Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi (296-322/909-33), founder of the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt, Ismailism achieved one of those triumphs of a temporal order whose consequences can prove fatal for a spiritual doctrine. On the other hand, up until the advent of the Safavids in Iran in the sixteenth century, Twelver Shiism, from century to century, underwent the trials, vicissitudes and persecutions meted out to a religious minority. Yet this minority survived, thanks to the irremissible awareness it possessed of bearing witness to the true Islam, of being faithful to the teachings

of the holy Imams, the 'repositories of the secret of God's Messenger'. The complete teachings of the Imams form a massive *corpus,* a summa on which Shiite thinking has drawn from century to century. This thinking arises from the prophetic religion itself, and is not the product of something brought in from outside. This is why it should be accorded a special place in the body of what we call 'Islamic philosophy'. We can, moreover, understand why several generations of Shiite theologians devoted themselves to gathering together most of the traditions of the Imams, building them up into a *corpus,* and determining the rules whereby the validity of the 'chains of transmission' *(isnad)* could be guaranteed.

We can distinguish four great periods:

1. The first is the period of the holy Imams and of their followers and friends, several of whom, such as Hisham ibn al-Hakam, a. passionate young follower of the sixth Imam, had already made collections of their teachings, apart from writing their own personal works. This period lasted until the date which marks the 'great Occultation' *(al-ghaybah al-kubra)* of the twelfth Imam: 329/940. It is also the date of the death of the last *na'ib* or representative, 'Ali al-Samarri, who, on the orders of the Imam himself, did not appoint anyone to succeed him. The same year saw the death of the great theologian Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni, who had moved from Rayy(Raghes), near Tehran, to Baghdad, where he spent twenty years collecting from their original sources the thousands of traditions *{hadith* and *akhbar)* which constitute the oldest organized body of Shiite tradition (ed. Tehran, 1955, in 8 vols., large in-8°). Several other names deserve mention, among them that of Abu Ja'far al-Qummi {d. 290/903), a friend of the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-'Askari.

2. The second period extends from the 'great Occultation' of the twelfth Imam down to Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 672/1273), a Shiite philosopher and theologian, mathematician and astronomer, and contemporary with the first Mongol invasion. It is mainly distinguished by the elaboration of the great summas of Twelver Shiite traditions which were the work of Ibn Babuyah of Qumm, known as al-Shaykh al-Saduq, who died in 3 81 / 991, one of the greatest Shiite theologians of the time and author of some three hundred works; of al-Shaykh al-Mufid {d. 413/1022), likewise a very prolific author; of Muhammad

ibn al-Hasan Tusi (d. 460/1067); and of Qutb al-Din Sa'id al-Rawandi {d. 573/1177). This was also the period of the two brothers Sayyid al-Sharif al-Ral (d. 406/1015) and Sayyid al-Murtada 'Alam al-Huda (d. 436/1044), descendants of the seventh Imam, and both of them authors of numerous Imamite treatises. The former is famous mainly for his compilation *Nahj al-balaghah* {see below). It is the time, too, of Fadi al-Tabarsi {d. 548/1153 or 552/1157), author of a famous and monumental Shiite *tafsir* (Quranic commentary); of Ibn Shahrashub (d. 588/1192); of Yahya ibn al-Bitriq {d. 600/1204); and of Sayyid Radi al-Din 'Ail ibn al-Ta'us {d. 664/1266), all of them the authors of important works of Imamology. Many other names belong to this period, which moreover witnessed the elaboration of the great Ismaili systematic treatises (see below, B) as well as those of the so-called Hellenizing philosophers, from al-Kindi to al-Suhrawardi (d. 587/1191). The work of Nasir al-Din Tusi completes the formation of Shiite philosophy, the first systematic sketch of which had been undertaken by Abu Ishaq al-Nawbakhti (d.ca. 350/961), in a book on which Al-'Allamah al-Hilli (d. 726/1326), a pupil of Nasir al-Din Tusi, was later to write a detailed commentary. These dates are already later than the limit we assigned to the first part of this study, which was the death of Averroes in 1198 CE. Nevertheless, the following observations are necessary in order to complete the picture, which cannot be segmented.

3. The third period extends from Nasir al-Din Tusi up to the Safavid Renaissance in Iran, which saw the rise of the school of Isfahan under Mir Damad (d. 1041/1631) and his students. A remarkably productive period prepared the way for this Renaissance. On the one hand, there was the continuation of the school of Nasir al-Din Tusi, with the addition of great names such as al-'Allamah al-Hilli and Afdal al-Din Kashani. On the other hand, an extraordinary convergence took place. Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 638/1240) emigrated from Andalusia to the East, while from central Asia the followers of Najm al-Din al-Kubra poured back into Iran and Anatolia before the Mongol invasion. The encounter between these two schools was responsible for a great upsurge in *Sufi metaphysics.* The outstanding figure of Twelver Shiite Sufism at the time was Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah or Hamuyi (d. 650/1252), a follower of Najm al-Din al-Kubra and a correspondent of Ibn al-'Arabi, whose works were circulated by his follower, 'Aziz al-Din **al-'Nasafi.** 'Ala

al-Dawlah al-Simnani (d. 736/1336) was destined to be one of the great masters of 'interiorizing' exegesis, while the influence of Ibn al-'Arabi and that of Nasir al-Din Tusi came together in the person of Sadr al-Din al-Qunyawi. The problem of the *walayah* (see below, A, 3ff.) was the subject of exhaustive discussion; it led back to the sources of Shiite gnosis, as these were brought to light by Haydar Amuli, a Shiite thinker of the first order in the eighth/fourteenth century. Indeed, another remarkable convergence takes place: on the Ismaili side, the fall of Alamut is responsible for a 'return' of Ismailism to Sufism, while on the Twelver Shiite side during this period there is a tendency in the same direction. Haydar Amuli made a great effort to bring Shiism and Sufism together: in the name of mystical theosophy he drafted a critical history of Islamic philosophy and theology. He was a follower of Ibn al-'Arabi, whom he admired and commentated, but he differs from him in one essential respect *(cf.* below). He was contemporary with Rajab ibn Muhammad al-Bursi, whose crucial work on Shiite gnosis was written in 774/1372. In the same context we may mention the names of the great Sufi shaykh and prolific author, Shah Ni'mat Allah al-wali (d. 834/1431), two Shiite followers of Ibn al-'Arabi, Sa'in al-Din Turkah al-Isfahani (d. 830/1427) and Muhammad ibn Abi Jumhur al-Ahsa'i (d. 901/1495) and Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Lahiji (d. 918/1512), commentator on the famous mystic of Azerbaijan, Mahmud Shabistari, who died in 720/1320 at the age of thirty-three.

4. The fourth period, noted above as being the period of the Safavid Renaissance and of the school of Isfahan with Mir Damad {d. 1041/1631), Mulla Sadra Shirazi. 1050/1640), their pupils and their pupils' pupils (Ahmad al-'Alawi, Muhsin Fayd, 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, Qadi Sa'id Qummi, etc.) is a phenomenon which has no parallel elsewhere in Islam, where it is thought that philosophy came to an end with Averroes. These great thinkers of the period consider the excellency of the Shiite perspective to reside in the indissoluble unity of *pistis* and *gnosis*, of prophetic revelation and the philosophical intelligence which deepens the esoteric meaning of such a revelation. The monumental work of Mulla Sadra includes an invaluable commentary on the *corpus* of the Shiite traditions of al-Kulayni. He had several imitators, one of whom was the great theologian al-Majlisi, compiler of the vast *Bihar al-anwar* (Oceans of Lights) mentioned above,

unsympathetic towards the philosophers but frequently a philosopher in spite of himself. These works and their authors will be discussed in the third part of this study. They brings us to the Qajar period, which saw the formation of the important Shaykhi school after Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (d. 1241/1826), and finally to our own day, when a renaissance of traditional philosophy finds its focus in the work of Mulla Sadra.

We mentioned earlier a compilation made by Sharif al-Radi (d. 406/1015), a work entitled *Nahj al-balaghah* (commonly translated as the 'way of eloquence', but which comprehends the idea of efficaciousness and maturity). This is a large collection of the *Logia* of the First Imam, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (sermons, conversations, letters and so on). After the Quran and the *hadith* of the Prophet, it is the most important work not just for the religious life of Shiism in general, but for its philosophical thought. Indeed, the *Nahj al-balaghah* may be regarded as one of the most important sources of the doctrines professed by Shiite thinkers, especially those of the fourth period. Its influence can be sensed in the logical co-ordination of terms, the deduction of correct conclusions, and the creation of certain technical terms in Arabic which possess both richness and beauty, and which in this way entered the literary and philosophical language independently of the translation into Arabic of Greek texts. Some of the basic philosophical problems posed by the *Logia* of the Imam 'AH are fully developed by Mulla Sadra and his school. If one reads one of the conversations of the Imam 'All with his follower Kumayi ibn Ziyad—for example that in which he replies to the question 'What is truth?' *(haqiqah),* or that in which he describes the esoteric succession of the Sages in this world—one will find a type of thinking very characteristic of this whole tradition.

From this context arise features peculiar to Shiite philosophy, for the thinkers with whom we are concerned considered that the *Logia* of the Imam formed a complete philosophical cycle, and derived thence an entire metaphysical system. Certain doubts have been expressed about the authenticity of parts of the compilation; but the work as a whole belongs in any case to an early period. In order to understand what it contains, it is best to take it phenomenologically, that is to say, according to its explicit intention: whoever holds the pen, it is the Imam who speaks. It is to this that it owes its influence.

It is to be regretted that in the West no philosophical study has so far been made of this book. For if one studies it carefully, in the light of the successive amplifications written by its many commentators, both Shiite and Sunni (such as Maytham ibn'Ali al-Bahrani, Ibn al-Hadid, al-Khu'yi, and so on), and by its Persian translators, and if one combines it with the *Logia* of all the other Imams, it becomes clear why the expansion and the new developments of philosophical thought should have taken place in the Shiite world at a time when there had long ceased to be a living school of philosophy in Sunni Islam.

The conclusion to be drawn from this very general survey is that the starting point of Shiite philosophical meditation is, apart from the Quran, the entire body of the Imamic traditions. All attempts to explain the prophetic philosophy arising from this meditation must start from the same beginnings. There are two normative principles: (1) It would be useless to start from the outside and proceed to a historical critique of the 'chains of transmission', for too often such a critique loses its way among them. The only productive course is to proceed phenomenologically, taking these traditions, which have existed for centuries, as constituting in their totality the mirror in which the Shiite consciousness has revealed to itself its own aspirations. (2) The best way to systematize the themes, few in number, which are explored here in order to elicit the nature of prophetic philosophy, is by following the Shiite writers who have themselves commented on these same themes. In this way we will obtain a succinct overall view of things, free from vain historicism (the very idea of which was not even suspected by our thinkers). The principal commentaries that we will be studying are by Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi, Mir Damad, and the dense pages of Haydar Amuli. The Imamic texts that these commentaries elucidate will enable us to perceive the essence of *Shiism*, which is precisely the problem confronting us.

2. Esotericism

1. The conclusion to be drawn from the texts themselves, and above all from the teaching of the Imams, is that Shiism is, in essence, the esotericism of Islam. Take for example the meaning assigned to the Quranic verse 33:72: 'We offered to entrust our secrets *(al-amanah)* to the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they all refused to accept them, they all trembled to receive them. But man agreed to

take them upon himself; he is violent and ignorant.' The meaning of this impressive verse, which is the basis in Islamic thinking with respect to the *De dignitate hominis* theme, is not in doubt for Shiite commentators. The verse refers to the 'divine secrets', to the esoteric aspect of prophecy that the holy Imams passed on to their initiates. This interpretation can find justification in a statement actually made by the sixth Imam, in which he declares that the meaning of the verse in question is the *walayah* whose source is the Imam. Likewise, the Shiite exegetes, from Haydar Amuli to Mulla Fath Allah in the last century, have been concerned to demonstrate how man's violence and ignorance in this case are no reproach to him, but a cause for praise, for an act of sublime folly was needed to accept the divine trust. As long as man, symbolized by Adam, remains unaware of the fact that there is something *other* than God, he has the strength to bear such a formidable burden. As soon as he yields to the awareness that there is something overman God, he betrays the trust, either by rejecting it and handing it over to people who are unworthy of it, or quite simply by denying its existence. In the latter case, he reduces everything to the visible letter. In the first case, he infringes the 'discipline of the arcane' (*taqiyah, kitman)* prescribed by the Imams in conformity with the injunction, 'God commands you to make deposits to those entitled to them' (4:55). This means: God orders you not to pass on the divine trust of gnosis except to him who is worthy of it, who is an 'heir'. The whole notion of a knowledge which is a spiritual inheritance *{'irthi irthi;* see below, A, 4) is implicit in this injunction.

This is why the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir, as every Imam after him, has declared, 'Our cause is difficult; it requires great effort; it can be espoused only by an Angel of the highest rank, a prophet who is sent *(nabi mursal),* or a faithful initiate whose heart God has tested for its faith.' The sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, specified further: 'Our cause is a secret *(sirr)* within a secret, a secret of something which remains hidden, a secret which may only be disclosed by another secret; a secret upon a secret which is supported by a secret.' And again: 'Our cause is the truth and the truth of truth *(haqq al-haqq);* it is the exoteric aspect, and the esoteric aspect of the exoteric aspect, and the esoteric aspect of the esoteric aspect. It is the secret, and the secret of something which remains hidden, a secret which is supported by a secret.' The significance of these remarks was already observed in

a poem written by the fourth Imam, 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin (d. 95/714): 'I conceal the jewels of my Knowledge—For fear that some ignorant man, on seeing the truth, should crush us_O Lord! if I were to reveal one pearl of my gnosis—They would say to me: are you then a worshipper of idols?—And there would be Muslims who would see justice in the shedding of my blood!—They find abominable the most beautiful thing they are offered.'

2. One could make many citations of a similar import. They testify most admirably to the *ethos* of Shiism, to the awareness it possesses of being the esotericism of Islam; and it is impossible, historically speaking, to go back further than the teachings of the Imams in seeking for the sources of Islamic esotericism. It is on this account that Shiites, in the true sense, are those who accept the secrets of the Imams. Conversely, all those who have sought or who seek to confine the teaching of the Imams to the exoteric aspect—to questions of law and of ritual—mutilate the essence of Shiism. Affirmation of the esoteric aspect does not mean that the *shari'ah*—the letter and the exoteric aspect *(zahir)*—are simply abolished. It means that positive religion, deprived of spiritual reality *(haqiqah)* and of the esoteric aspect *(batin)*, becomes opaque and a form of slavery: it is no more than a catalogue or a catechism, no longer remaining open to the disclosure of meanings which are new and unforeseen.

Thus, as the first Imam observes, mankind is divided into three groups. (1) There is the *'alim rabbani*, the *theosophospos excellence*, represented by the Prophet and the holy Imams. (2) There are those who are receptive to the doctrine of salvation *(tariqat al-najah)* taught by the *theosophoi*, and who try to make others receptive to it. In every generation, such men have always been a minority. (3) There is the mass of those who remain impervious to this teaching. 'We {the Imams) are the Sages who instruct; our Shiites are those who are taught by us. The rest, alas, are the foam rolled along on the flood.' Esotericism revolves around the two centres of *shari'ah* and *haqiqah*, one the religion of the Law or social religion, the other mystical religion, based on the spiritual meaning of the Quranic Revelation, and thereby implying in essence a prophetology and an Imamology.

3. Prophetology

1. The oldest data we have for establishing Islamic prophetology are contained in the teaching of the Imams. Given what it is motivated by, it could be said that the Shiite milieu was indeed propitious for the rise, study and development of prophetology. More than any other form of Islamic thought, it is 'prophetic philosophy' that corresponds in essence to the consciousness of prophetic religion, because the 'divine science' is incommunicable; it is not a science in the ordinary sense of the word, and only a prophet can communicate it. The circumstances of this communication—those in which its content fructifies after the prophecy itself is concluded—constitute the real object of prophetic philosophy. This idea is part and parcel of the idea itself of Shiism, and is the reason why Shiism can never be absent from a history of Islamic philosophy.

The first thing to be noted is the remarkable similarity between the doctrine of the *'aql* (the intellect, the intelligence, the Nous) among the Avicennan philosophers, and the doctrine of the Spirit *(ruh)* in the Shiite texts which derive from the Imams. It follows that the first stage of a prophetic philosophy, whose theme is the necessity of prophets, develops in the case of both doctrines from converging considerations. We learn from a *hadith* of the sixth Imam, recorded by Ibn Babuyan, that man is constituted of five Spirits, or rather five degrees or states of Spirit. At the summit are to be found the Spirit of faith *(iman)* and the Holy Spirit. All five Spirits are fully actualized only by the prophets, the Messengers and the Imams; true believers possess four, and other men have three.

In a similar fashion, the philosophers, from Avicenna to Mulla Sadra, when considering the five states of the intellect, from the 'material' **or** potential intellect to the *intellectus sanctus*, admit that in the case of the majority of men the intellect only exists in a potential state, and that the conditions which would enable it to become active are present in a small number of men only. This being so, how could a large number of men, in the sway of their baser impulses, be in a position to form themselves into a single community observing the same law? For al-Biruni, the natural law is the law of the jungle; the antagonism between human beings can be overcome only through a divine Law, made known by a prophet or divine Messenger. **These** pessimistic considerations, voiced by al-Biruni **and** Avicenna, **reproduce almost**

literally the teaching of the Imams, as we know it from the opening of al-Kulayni's *Kitab al-Hujjah.*

2. However, Shiite prophetology certainly does not derive from mere positive sociology. What is at issue is man's spiritual destiny. The Shiite view which, in opposition to the Karramians and the Ash'arites, denies the possibility of *seeing* God in this world and the world beyond, is of a piece with the Imams' elaboration of a science of the heart, of knowledge through the heart *(al-ma'rifah al-qalbiyah)* which encompasses all the rational and supra-rational faculties, and adumbrates the form of gnosiology proper to a prophetic philosophy. Thus, on the one hand, the necessity of prophecy demands the existence of these men who are inspired, who are superhuman, of whom it could even be said (without involving the idea of the Incarnation} that they are 'divine man or divine lord in human form' *(insan rabbani, rabb insani).* On the other hand, Shiite prophetology was clearly distinct from the early schools of Sunni Islamic thought. The Ash'arites (see below, III, 2) rejected all notion of *tartib*—that is to say of any hierarchical structure of the world with mediating causes—and thereby destroyed the entire basis of prophecy. The extremist (al-Rawandi) Mu'tazilites, on their side, made the following objection: either prophecy is in accordance with reason, or it is not. In the first case, it is superfluous; in the second case, it must be rejected. Mu'tazilite rationalism was unable to perceive the level of being and of awareness on which this dilemma simply evaporates.

The mediator who is a necessary condition of Shiite prophetology is technically known as *hujjah* (the *proof,* God's guarantee to men). Nevertheless, idea and function transcend the limits of any particular epoch: the presence of the *hujjah* needs to be continuous, even if it is an invisible presence to which the majority of men are oblivious. If, therefore, the term is applied to the Prophet, it is in turn applied even more emphatically to the Imams. (In the hierarchy of the Ismailism of Alamut, the *hujjah* becomes in some sense a spiritual double of the Imam; *cf.* below, B, II.) The idea of the *hujjah* thus already presupposes the inseparability of prophetology from Imamology; and because it transcends time, it originates in a metaphysical reality, the vision of which takes us back to the gnostic theme of the celestial *Anthropos.*

3. The Imam Ja'far teaches that 'the human Form is the supreme evidence by means of which God testifies to his Creation. It is the *Book he* has written with his hand. It is the *Temple he* has built with his wisdom. It is the coming together of the Forms of all the universes. It is the compendium of the disclosed knowledge of the *Tabula secreta (lawh mahfuz).* It is the visible witness, answering for all that is invisible *(ghayb).* It is the guarantee, the proof opposed to all who deny. It is the straight Way between paradise and hell.'

This is the theme on which Shiite prophetology has elaborated. The human Form in its pre-eternal glory is called Adam in the true and real sense of the name *(Adam haqiqi), Homo maximus (insan kabir),* supreme Spirit, First Intelligence, supreme Pen, supreme Caliph, Pole of Poles. This celestial *Anthropos* is invested with, and is the keeper of, eternal prophecy *(nubuwah baqiyah),* of the essential and primordial prophecy *(nubuwah asliyah haqiqiyah),* which was disclosed before time in the celestial Pleroma. He is also the *haqiqah muhammadiyah,* the eternal Muhammadan Reality, the Muhammadan Light of glory, the Muhammadan Logos. It was to him that the Prophet was alluding when he said, 'God created Adam (the *Anthropos)* in the image of his own Form'. And as the terrestrial epiphany *(mazhar)* of this *Anthropos,* he uses the first person when he says, 'The first thing that God created was my Light' (or the Intelligence, or the Pen, or the Spirit). This was also his meaning when he said, 'I was already a prophet when Adam (the earthly Adam) was still between water and clay' (that is to say, was not yet formed).

This eternal prophetic Reality is a bi-unity. It possesses two 'dimensions', one external and exoteric, and one inner or esoteric. The *walayah is* specifically the esoteric dimension of this eternal prophecy *(nubuwah);* it is the realization of all its perfections according to the esoteric dimension, before the beginning of time, and it is their eternal perpetuation. Just as the exoteric 'dimension' had a final terrestrial manifestation in the person of the Prophet Muhammad, the esoteric 'dimension' likewise needed to have a terrestrial epiphany. It achieved it in the person of him who above all other men was closest to the Prophet: 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first Imam. He was thus able to say, echoing the sentence quoted above, 'I was already a *wali* when Adam (the earthly Adam) was still between water and clay.'

The two persons of the Prophet and the Imam, prior to their earthly

kinship, share a spiritual relationship *(nisbah ma'nawiyah)* which is established in their pre-existence: 'I and 'Ali are one and the same Light.' 'I and 'Ali together were one and the same light fourteen thousand years before God created the earthly Adam.' In the same *hadith* the Prophet indicates how this unique Light was transmitted from generation to generation of prophets, and then branched into two and was made manifest in their two persons. In conclusion, the Prophet addresses the Imam: 'If I were not afraid that a part of my community would commit the same excesses towards you as the Christians committed towards Jesus, I would say of you something as a result of which you could no longer pass by a group of men without them gathering up the dust of your feet in order to find healing in it. But it is enough that you are a part of myself, and that I am a part of you. He who inherits from you will be my heir, for you stand in the same relation to me as Aaron to Moses, with the difference that after me there will be no other prophet.' Finally, there is the following decisive statement: "AH was sent *secretly* with every prophet; with me he was sent openly.' This last is as precise a statement as could be wished for. The Muhammadan Imamate, as the esotericism of Islam, is *eo ipso* the esotericism of all previous prophetic religions.

4. These all too brief remarks give us a clearer idea of the work of Shiite thinkers on the categories of prophecy and of the *walayah.* There is an absolute prophecy *(nubuwah mutlaqah),* which is common or general, and there is a prophecy which is limited or particular *(muqay-yadah).* The first of these is proper to the absolute, integral and primordial Muhammadan Reality, from pre-eternity to post-eternity. The second is constituted by the partial realities of the first—that is to say, by the particular epiphanies of prophecy, represented in turn by the *nabis* or prophets of whom the Prophet of Islam was the Seal, being on this account the epiphany of the *haqiqah muhammadiyah.* The same is true in the case of the *walayah,* the esoteric aspect of eternal prophecy: there is a *walayah* which is absolute and general, and there is a *walayah* which is limited and particular. Just as the respective prophecy of each of the prophets is a partial reality and epiphany *(mazhar)* of absolute prophecy, the *walayah* of all the *awliya'* (the Friends of God or men of God) is each time a partial reality and epiphany of the absolute *walayah* whose Seal is the first Imam, whereas the Seal of the Muhammadan *walayah* is the Mahdi, the twelfth Imam

(the 'hidden Imam'}. Thus the Muhammadan Imamate, the pleroma of the Twelve, is the Seal *(khatim)* of the *walayah.* All together, the *nabis* stand in the same relation to the Seal of prophecy as the latter to the Seal of the *awliya'.*

It is thus evident that the essence *(haqiqah)* of the Seal of the prophets and that of the Seal of the *awliya'* is one and the same, viewed both exoterically (as prophecy) and esoterically (as the *walayah).* The situation confronting us is as follows. Everyone in Islam is unanimous in professing that the cycle of prophecy came to an end with Muhammad, Seal of the prophets. For Shiism, however, the closing of the cycle of prophecy coincided with the opening of the cycle of the *walayah,* the cycle of spiritual Initiation. As we will explain later, what in fact came to an end, according to the Shiite authors, was 'legislative prophecy'. Prophecy pure and simple characterizes the spiritual state of those who before Islam were called *nabis,* but who from then on were designated *awliya':* the name was changed, but the thing itself remained. Such is the vision which typifies Shiite Islam, inspiring the expectation of a future to which it remains open. It is a conception based on a classification of the prophets, itself founded on the prophetic gnosiology taught by the Imams themselves (see below, A, 5). It also establishes an order of precedence between *wali, nabi and rasul,* the Twelver Shiite understanding of which differs from that of Ismailism.

In connection with the *nubuwah,* we can distinguish a *nubuwah al-ta'rif,* a teaching or 'gnostic' prophecy, and a *nubuwah al-tashri,* or legislative prophecy. The latter is properly the *risalah,* the prophetic mission of the *rasul* or Messenger, whose mission it is to announce the *shari'ah*—the divine Law, the 'celestial Book which has descended into his heart'—to mankind. There have been many messenger *nabis (nabi mursal),* whereas the series of great prophets whose mission it was to announce the *shari'ah* is limited to the *ulu al- 'azm* (the men of decision), who are six in number: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad—or, according to some traditions, seven counting David and his psalter.

5. This prophetology establishes a situation which is expressed above all in the definition of the relationship between the *walayah,* prophecy *(nubuwah),* and the mission of the Messenger *(risalah),* and thence between the person of the *wali,* the person of the prophet and the person

of the Messenger. If we represent the three concepts by three concentric circles, the *walayah* is represented by the central circle, because it is the esoteric aspect of prophecy; prophecy is represented by the middle circle, because it is the esoteric or 'inner' aspect of the mission of the Messenger; and this mission is represented by the outer circle. Every *rasul* is also *nabi and wali.* Every *nabi is* also a *wali.* The *wali* can only be the *wali.* Paradoxically, it follows that the order of precedence among the qualifications is the inverse of the order of precedence among the persons. Our authors explain this as follows.

Being the heart and the esoteric aspect, the *walayah* is more eminent than the exoteric appearance, because the latter has need of the former: just as the mission of the Messenger presupposes the spiritual state of the *nabi,* the latter in turn presupposes the *walayah.* The closer something is to the inner realities, the more sufficient it is to itself and the greater its proximity to God, for this proximity is dependent on the inner realities of being. It follows, therefore, that the *walayah*—the quality of being a Friend of God, of a spiritual initiate and initiator—is more eminent than the quality of a *nabi,* and that this is more eminent than the quality of a Messenger (in the order of increasing exteriority). As our authors repeat, the *risalah* is like the shell, the *nubuwah* is like the almond, and the *walayah* is like the oil within the almond. In other words: the mission of the Messenger, in the absence of the state of a *nabi,* would be like the *shari'ah* or positive religion deprived of the *tariqah,* the mystical way; like the exoteric without the esoteric; like the empty shell without the almond. And the state of a *nabi* without the *walayah* would be like the mystical way of *fangah* without spiritual realization *(haqiqah);* like the esoteric without the esoteric aspect of the esoteric *(batin al-batin);* like the almond without its oil. We come across an analogous relationship between the notions of *wahy, ilham* and *kashf in* gnosiology (see below, A, 5).

Nevertheless, in thus affirming the superiority of the *walayah,* the Twelver Shiites do not mean to imply that the person of the *wali* pure and simple is superior to the persons of the *nabi* and the Messenger. What is meant is that of the three qualities, viewed in the single person of the Prophet of Islam, the *walayah is* pre-eminent, because it is the source, foundation and support of the two others. Hence the apparent paradox: that even though the *walayah* is pre-eminent, in concrete terms it is the prophet-Messenger who takes precedence, because he

contains all three qualities: he is *wali-nabi-rasul.* We may observe with Haydar Amuli that on this point Twelver Shiism differs from Ismailism, or more specifically from the reformed Ismailism of Alamut, which was merely the rediscovery, perhaps, of the deepest aims of primitive Shiism. As we shall see (see below, B, II), the Ismaili position adopted in Alamut was no less strict: since the *walayah is* superior to the quality of prophet-messenger, and since the *walayah* of the Imam is of the esoteric order, while the prophecy of the Messenger (the legislator) is of the exoteric order; since, finally, the esoteric aspect is pre-eminent over the exoteric aspect, it must be concluded that the Imam takes fundamental precedence over the prophet, and that the esoteric aspect is independent of the exoteric aspect. Conversely, the position adopted by Twelver Shiism (in spite of the ever-latent tendency of Shiism to affirm the precedence of the Imam), was an endeavour to maintain an equilibrium: any exoteric aspect which is not supported by an esoteric aspect is in fact an infidelity *(kufr),* but, equally, any esoteric aspect which does not at the same time maintain the existence of an exoteric aspect is libertinism. As we can see, the meaning of the relationship between prophetology and Imamology is reversed according to which of the two positions, Imamite or Ismaili, one chooses to adopt.

4. Imamology

1. The concept of the Imam is postulated by the twofold nature of the 'eternal Muhammadan Reality' described above (A, 3), which implies, among other things, that the cycle of prophecy is succeeded by the cycle of the *walayah.* What the Imams persistently stress first of all is that the Prophet annunciator must be followed by a 'Keeper of the Book' *(qayyim al-Qur'an).* This gives rise to much animated discussion in the Imams' circle, and even to debates with certain Mu'tazilites (see below, HI), in which one of the chief protagonists is the young Hisham ibn al-Hakam, favourite disciple of the sixth Imam. The thesis maintained against the opposition is that the text of the Quran in itself is not enough, because it contains hidden meanings, esoteric depth, and apparent contradictions. The knowledge of such a book cannot be grasped by the norms of ordinary philosophy: the text must be 'taken back' (*ta'wil)* to the level on which its true meaning is manifest. Such a task is not within the competence of dialectic, of

the *kalam:* one does not construct the *true meaning out* of syllogisms. Its discernment requires someone who is both a spiritual heir and inspired, who is in possession of both the esoteric aspect *(batin)* and the exoteric aspect *(zahir).* He is God's *hujjah,* the Keeper of the Book, the Imam or Guide. One must therefore endeavour to assess what constitutes the essence of the Imam, in the person of the Twelve Imams.

In his commentary on the texts of the Imams, Mulla Sadra, speaking about this very subject, states its philosophical presuppositions: that which has no cause (that which is *ab-imo)* is not susceptible to being known; its essence it not susceptible to definition; it cannot be proved by means of something else, because *It* is itself the proof. One is only able to know God through God, not, in the manner of the *kalam* theologians, by *starting from* the creatural, not by starting from the contingent being, in the manner of the philosophers *(falasifah).* It is possible to attain exalted knowledge only through divine revelation *(wahy)* or inspiration *(ilham).* After the Prophet who was God's *hujjah,* it is impossible that the Earth should remain without a *hujjah,* God's surety, answering for God before men and thereby enabling them to approach God. He may be publicly recognized, or he may remain unknown to the majority of men, veiled by an *incognito* way of life. He is indispensable as the Guide to the hidden meanings of the Book, meanings that can be grasped only through divine illumination. Imamology is an essential postulate of prophetic philosophy. The first question, therefore, is this: after the Prophet, who could claim to be the 'Keeper of the Book'?

2. The witnesses are unanimous on this point. One of the Prophet's most famous Companions, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, relates how profoundly impressed were those who listened to 'All's commentary on the *Fatihah* (the first Surah of the Quran). The first Imam himself gives this testimony: 'Not a single verse of the Quran descended upon (was revealed to) the Messenger of God which he did not proceed to dictate to me and make me recite. I would write it with my own hand, and he would instruct me as to its *tafsir* (the literal explanation) and the *ta'wil* (the spiritual exegesis), the *nasikh* (the verse which abrogates) and the *mansukh* (the abrogated verse), the *muhkam* and the *mutashabih* (the fixed and the ambiguous), the particular and the general. And he would pray to God to increase my understanding and my memory. Then he would lay his hand on my breast and ask

God to fill my *heart* with knowledge and understanding, with judgement and illumination.'

Once again, our texts resort to the theme of the *heart* in order to make the function of the Imam intelligible: he stands in the same relation to the spiritual community as the *heart to* the human organism. The comparison in itself serves to stress the interiority of Imamology. When, for example, Mulla Sadra speaks of 'that celestial *(malakuti)* reality which is the Imamate within man', he intimates how Imamology comes to fruition in mystical experience. Moreover, the hidden Imam is present in the *heart* of his Shiites up until the day of the Resurrection. We shall speak later of the profound significance of the *ghaybah* (the occupation of the Imam), that divine *incognito* which is essential to a prophetic philosophy because it preserves what is divine from becoming an *object,* as it preserves it from all socialization. The Imam's authority is quite different from the dogmatic magisterium which governs a Church. The Imams are initiators into the hidden meaning of the Revelations; themselves its inheritors, they made over the heritage to those qualified to receive it. One of the fundamental notions in gnosiology is *'ilm irthi,* a knowledge which is a spiritual heritage. This is why Shiism is not what might be called a 'religion of authority', in the way that a Church is. The Imams have, in fact, fulfilled their earthly mission; they are no longer in this world in a material sense. Their continuing presence is a supra-sensible presence, and it is also a 'spiritual authority' in the true sense of the word. Their teaching endures, and is the basis of the entire hermeneutic of the Book.

The first among them, the first Imam, is designated as the foundation of the Imamate. In the Shiite view, however, he cannot be dissociated from the other *eleven* Figures who together make up the pleroma of the Imamate, because the law of the number *twelve,* symbolic cipher of a totality, is constant at all the periods of the prophetic cycle (some of the homologues were mentioned above: the twelve signs of the zodiac, the twelve springs which gushed from the rock struck by the rod of Moses; the relationship with the twelve months of the year is in accordance with the ancient theologies of the *Aion).* Each of the great prophets, annunciators of a *shari'ah,* had his twelve Imams. The Prophet himself said, 'May God take care, after me, of 'Ali and of the *awsiya'* (the inheritors) of my posterity (the eleven), for they are the Guides. God gave them my understanding and my knowledge,

which means that they hold the same rank as me, as regards being worthy of my succession and of the Imamate.' As Haydar Amuli says, 'All the Imams are one and same Light *(nur),* one and the same Essence *(haqiqah*), exemplified in twelve persons. Everything that applied to one of them applies equally to each of the others.'

3. This concept is based on a whole metaphysics of Imamology which has undergone considerable development both within Ismaili theosophy and within Twelver Shiism, particularly in the Shaykhi school. The premisses of this metaphysics are furnished by the Imamic texts themselves. In order to understand the bearing these have, we must remember in addition that if Imamology was confronted with the same problems as Christology, it always tended to find solutions which, although rejected by official Christianity, were nevertheless close to gnostic conceptions. When the relationship is envisaged between *lahut* (divinity) and *nasut* (humanity) in the person of the Imams, there is never a question of anything resembling a hypostatic union of two natures. The Imams are divine epiphanies, theophanies. The technical vocabulary *(zuhur, mazhar)* always has reference to the comparison with the phenomenon of a mirror: the image appearing in the mirror is not incarnate in (or immanent in) the substance of the mirror. Understood in this way, as being neither less nor more than divine epiphanies, the Imams are the Names of God, and as such they preserve us from the twofold dangers of *tashbih* (anthropomorphism) and *ta'til* (agnosticism). Their pre-existence as a Pleroma of beings of light had already been affirmed by the sixth Imam: 'God created us out of the Light of his sublimity, and from the clay (of our light) he created the spirits of our Shiites'. This is the reason why their names were written in letters of fire on the mysterious Emerald Tablet in the possession of Fatimah, the originator of their line (one recalls here the *Tabula smaragdina* of Hermeticism).

The titles given to the Imams can be truly understood only when they are considered as Figures of light, pre-cosmic entities. They themselves confirmed these titles during the time of their earthly epiphany. Al-Kulayni included a large collection of them in his massive compilation. In this way, the phases of the famous verse of the Light (Quran 24:35) are ascribed respectively to the Fourteen Most Pure Ones (the Prophet, Fatimah and the Twelve Imams). They are the only 'immaculate Ones' *(ma'sum),* preserved from, and immune to, all

uncleanness. The fifth Imam says, 'The light of the Imam in the *heart* of believers is more brilliant than the sun which gives out the light of day.' The Imams are, in fact, those who illumine the hearts of believers, while those from whom God veils this light are hearts of darkness. They are the pillars of the Earth, the Signs *('alamat)* mentioned by God in his Book, those on whom the gift of infused wisdom has been bestowed. They are the caliphs of God on Earth, the Thresholds whereby he may be approached, the Chosen Ones, the heirs of the prophets. The Quran guides one to the Imams. (As theophanic figures, the Imams are no longer only the guides to the hidden meaning, but they are that esoteric meaning itself.) They are the mine of gnosis, the tree of prophecy, the place of the Angels' visitation, inheritors of knowledge one from the other. They contain the totality of the books 'descended' (revealed) from God. They know God's supreme Name. They are the equivalent of the Ark of the Covenant in Israel. It is to their descent to earth that the descent of the Spirit and the Angels on the Night of Destiny alludes (Surah 97). They are in possession of all the knowledge 'brought' by the Angels to the prophets and the Messengers. Their knowledge encompasses the totality of all times. They are *muhaddathun* ('those to whom the Angels speak'; *cf.* below, A, 5). Because they are the light in the hearts of believers, the well-known maxim 'he who knows himself, knows his lord' means: 'he knows his Imam' (that is, the Face that for him is the Face of God). Conversely, he who dies without knowing his Imam dies the death of the oblivious—he dies, that is to say, without knowing himself.

4. These affirmations culminate in the famous 'Sermon of the Great Declaration' *(Khutbah al-Bayan),* attributed to the first Imam, although in it an eternal Imam finds expression: 'I am the Sign of the All-Powerful. I am the gnosis of the mysteries. I am the Threshold of Thresholds. I am the companion of the radiance of the divine Majesty. I am the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden. I am the Face of God. I am the mirror of God, the supreme Pen, the *Tabula secreta.* I am he who in the Gospel is called Elijah. I am he who is in possession of the secret of God's Messenger.' The sermon proceeds to proclaim seventy more such affirmations, all equally extraordinary. To whatever period this *Khutbah* may belong (a period much older, in any case, than certain critics have thought), it demonstrates the fruitfulness in Shiite Imamology of the gnostic theme of the celestial *Anthropos,* of

the 'eternal Muhammadan Reality'. The statements of the Imam are perfectly comprehensible in the light of what we have already said about this Reality. Because 'their *walayah* is the esoteric aspect of prophecy', they are in fact the key to all the Quranic sigla, the mysterious letters inscribed at the head or as the title of certain Quranic Surahs.

Furthermore, since they all share in the same Essence, the same Light, what is said of the Imams in general applies to each of the Twelve. Historically speaking, their succession is as follows: 1. 'Ali, the Amir of believers (d. 40/661). 2. Hasan al-Mujtaba (d. 49/669). 3. Husayn Sayyid al-Shuhada' (d. 61/680). 4. 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin {d. 92/711). 5. Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 115/733). 6. Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765). 7. Musa al-Kazim {d. 183/799). 8. 'Ali al-Rida (d. 203/818). 9. Muhammad al-Jawad al-Taqi (d. 220/835). 10. 'Ali al-Naqi (d. 254/868). 11. Hasan al-'Askari (d. 260/874). 12. Muhammad al-Mahdi, *al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah.* All of them repeated that they were the heirs of the knowledge of God's Messenger and of all the previous prophets. The meaning of this quality of being an heir will be revealed to us by gnosiology. We have already learned enough to eliminate one prejudice or misunderstanding. Never has physical descent from the Prophet been enough to make an Imam: *nass* and *'ismah,* investiture and impeccability, are also needed. The Imamate does not derive from mere earthly kinship with the Prophet. It is rather the contrary that is true: their earthly kinship derives from, and is the sign of, their pleromatic unity with the Prophet.

5. We may also briefly note here that the idea of *walayah* is so rooted in Shiism itself that it appears inseparable from it. Nevertheless, it was dissociated from it, and this is what constitutes the whole history of non-Shiite Sufism, whose origins, as we said, have not yet been completely explored. In this case the *walayah* loses its support, its source and its coherence; what was ascribed to the Imam is transferred to the Prophet. Once the *walayah* is thus uprooted from Imamology, a serious consequence ensues. The 'four imams', founders of the four juridical rituals of Sunni Islam (Hanbalite, Hanafite, Malikite, Shafi'ite), are credited with being the heirs of the prophets and of the Prophet. The organic link, the bi-polarity of *shan'ah* and *haqiqah,* was broken and, by the same token, legalistic religion—the purely juridical interpretation of Islam—was consolidated. We find ourselves here at the

source of an altogether typical phenomenon of popularization and socialization. The *batin* isolated from the *zahir,* rejected even, produces a situation in which philosophers and mystics are out of true, engaged upon a path which becomes increasingly 'compromising'. We gain a clear idea of this phenomenon, which up to now has not been analysed, from the protests of all those Shiites (with Haydar Amuli at the head) who understand full well the chief reason for Islam's descent into a purely legalistic religion. They deny that 'four imams' can be the heirs of the Prophet, firstly because their knowledge is wholly exoteric, and so is in no way a knowledge which is a spiritual heritage (*'ilm irthi);* and secondly, because the function of the *walayah* is precisely to make the Imams the heirs of the *batin.* Shiite gnosiology enables us to understand what is at stake here, and to grasp the gravity of the situation.

5. Gnosiology

1. There is an essential link between the gnosiology of a prophetic philosophy and the phenomenon of the sacred Book 'descended from Heaven'. At the heart of a community of *ahl al-kitab* the theme of prophetic inspiration is bound to be a crucial one for philosophical reflection. The prophetic philosophy which arose in Shiite Islam found its true voice in this theme; at the same time its orientation differs profoundly from that of Christian philosophy, which is centred on the fact of the Incarnation as the entry of the divine into history and chronology. The relationship between knowledge and belief, theology and philosophy, was not conceived in the same way in the two traditions. Where Shiite Islam is concerned, gnosiology was to concentrate on suprasensible knowledge, establishing its categories in relation to prophetic knowledge, and in relation to the hierarchy of persons that was determined by the relationship, described above, between *nubuwah* and *walayah.* Certainly the rational dialectic of the *mutakallimun* lacked the resources for such a prophetic philosophy. Those who engaged in it were the *hukama'ilahlyun,* a designation whose literal equivalent, as we saw, is the *theosophoi.*

In the work of al-Kulayni, the *hadith* which mainly transmit the gnosiological doctrine of the fifth, sixth and seventh Imams establish a classification of the levels of knowledge and of the prophetic persons that correspond to the degrees of mediation on the part of the Angel.

This link between gnosiology and angelology was to enable the philosophers *(falasifah)* to identify the Angel of Knowledge with the Angel of Revelation. Nevertheless, it would be a fundamental error to see this identification of the ' *aql* (Intelligence) with the *ruh* (Spirit), Nous as a rationalization of the Spirit. The notion of *'aql* (intellectus, intelligentia) is not the same as that of *ratio.* (It could even be said that it was angelology, allied with Avicennan gnosiology and cosmology, which was responsible for the rejection of Latin Avicennism in the twelfth century, because at that time Latin scholasticism was taking quite a different line.) Furthermore, it must be stressed that the classification of the prophets and of the modes of knowledge corresponding to them originates in the teaching of the Imams, a more ancient source than which it is impossible to discover.

2. The Imams list, describe and explain four categories. (1) There is the prophet or *nabi who* is a prophet only for himself. He is not obliged to proclaim the message that he has received from God, because it is a strictly personal one. This is so to speak an 'intransitive' type of prophecy, which does not go beyond the limits of his person. He is 'sent' only with respect to himself. (2) There is the *nabi who* has visions and hears the voice of the Angel *while dreaming,* but does not see the Angel in his waking state, and is likewise not sent to anyone (as in the case of Lot, for example). (3) In addition to these two categories of *nabis* pure and simple, there is the category of the prophet who has the vision or perception of the Angel not only while dreaming, but also in his *waking* state. He may be sent, like Jonah, to a group more or less numerous. This is the *nablmursal,* the prophet-messenger, with whom we are as yet concerned only with regard to the *nubuwat al-ta'rif,* the prophecy which teaches or notifies. (4) Within the category of prophet-messengers we may distinguish the category of the six (or seven) great prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, Muhammad): Messengers whose mission *(risalah)* it is to proclaim a *shari'ah,* a new divine Law which abrogates the one preceding it. Properly speaking, this is the *nubuwat al-tashri'* or legislative prophecy (see above, A, 3). Finally, it is specified that the *risalah* can come only to a *nabi in* whom the prophetic quality, the *nubuwah,* has attained maturity, just as the *nubuwah* can come only to someone in whom the *walayah* is fully developed. There is a sort of progressive divine initiation.

There are two immediate observations to be made. The first relates to the question of why the notion of *walayah* intervenes at all. In speaking of the first two categories of *nabi,* all our commentators tell us that these are, quite simply, *awliya';* they are 'men of God', in possession of knowledge that they have not had to acquire from any external source *(iktisab),* through the teaching of men. They do not, however, have the vision of the cause of their knowledge—the vision, that is, of the Angel who 'projects' this knowledge into their hearts. But a most important point is made here: the word *wali* (Friend and Beloved of God) was not applied to any of the *awliya'* during the periods of prophecy previous to the mission of the prophet of Islam. They were called, simply, *anbiya'* (plural of *nabi),* or prophets. (We may call to mind here the *bene ha-nevi'im* of the Bible.) After Islam, the term *nabi* can no longer be used, and one says *awliya'.* But the difference between the *walayah* and simple prophecy (the prophecy which does not involve the mission of revealing a new *shari'ah)* lies only in the use of the word, not in the idea or the meaning. Gnosiologically speaking, the case of the ancient *nabis* exactly parallels the case of the Imams: they have auditory perception of the Angel in sleep (the *muhaddathun,* 'those to whom the Angels speak'). This is of decisive importance, as the basis of the whole Shiite idea of the cycle of the *walayah* coming after the cycle of prophecy. The fact that it is only 'legislative prophecy' which has come to an end makes possible the continuation, under the name *walayah,* of an 'esoteric prophecy' *(nubuwah batiniyah)*—the continuation, that is to say, of *hierohistory* (see below, A, 6).

The second observation is the following. The categories of prophetic gnosiology are established in relation to the visible, audible or invisible mediation of the Angel; in relation, that is, to the awareness of these things that the subject may possess. The mission of the Messenger implies the waking vision of the Angel (a vision whose modality will be explained by a mode of perception which is different from sense perception). This is what is properly called *wahy* (divine communication). As regards the other categories, one speaks of *ilham* (inspiration), with its varying degrees, and *of kashf,* or mystical unveiling. A *hadith* •ays that 'the Imam hears the voice of the Angel, but does not have the vision of him, either in sleep or in waking'.

3. These differing modes of higher gnosis, *hierognosis,* were studied

at length by our authors. Their meaning can be grasped only when they are related to prophetology in its entirety. When the Prophet himself praises the exemplary case of 'Ali, who above all the other Companions was able to advance towards God through the strength of his *'aql* (intelligence) in quest of Knowledge, what is in question is a prophetic notion of the *'aql,* the predominance of which might have completely altered the philosophical situation in Islam. This philosophy, in making plain the link that it established between the mediation of the Angel and the illumination of the Intelligence, would have been 'at home'. Ultimately, as we saw, the gnosiology of the philosophers rejoins prophetic gnosiology, in identifying the *'aql fa' 'al* (the active Intelligence) with the Holy Spirit, Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation.

For this reason, we would be mutilating our perception of Shiite theosophy if we did not dwell briefly on the way in which our thinkers, in writing their commentaries, developed the gnosiology that was instituted by the Imams. The great master in this respect is Mulla Sadra. The doctrine that he develops in the margin of the Imamic texts presents all true knowledge as an epiphany or a theophany. This is because the *heart* (the subtle organ of light, *latifah nuraniyah,* the support of the intelligence) has through its native disposition the ability to embrace the spiritual realities *(haqa'iq)* of all objects of knowledge. Nevertheless, the knowledge which is epiphanized *(tajalli)* to it from behind the veil of mystery (the supra-sensible, *the ghayb)* may have its source in the *data* of the *shari'ah* (*'ilm shar'i,* and may be a spiritual science {*'ilm 'aqli)* proceeding directly from the Giver of the data. This *'aqli* science can be innate, *a priori [matbu' in* the terminology of the first Imam), the knowledge of first principles; or it can be acquired. If acquired, this may be through effort, observation, inference *(istibsar, i'tibar),* in which case it is nothing other than the science of the philosophers; or else it can assail the heart, be projected unexpectedly into it, which is what is called *ilham,* inspiration. With regard to this inspiration, it is necessary to distinguish the case in which it comes about without man's seeing the cause which 'projects' it into him (the Angel), as with the inspiration of the Imams and of the *awliya'* in general; and the case in which man has a direct vision of the cause, as happens in the divine communication (*wahy)* from Angel to prophet. Thus, such a gnosiology embraces simultaneously the knowledge of

the philosophers, of those who are inspired, and of the prophets, as graduated variations of one and the same Manifestation.

4. The idea of knowledge as an epiphany whose organ of perception has its seat in the heart leads to the establishment of two parallel series whose respective terms are homologous with each other. As regards external vision *{basar al-zahir),* there is the eye, the faculty of sight, perception *[idrak),* the sun. As regards inner vision *[basirat al-batin),* there is the heart *(qalb),* the intelligence (*'aql),* knowledge (*'ilm),* the Angel (the Holy Spirit or active Intelligence). Without the light of the sun, the eye cannot see. Without the light of the Angel-Intelligence, the human intellect cannot know. (Here the Avicennan theory is integrated to prophetic gnosiology.) This Angel-Intelligence is called the Pen *(qalam)* because he is the intermediary cause between God and man for the actualization of knowledge in the heart, as the pen is intermediary between the writer and the paper on which he is drawing or writing. There is thus no need to go from the sensible to the supra-sensible order, wondering whether it is legitimate to do so, neither does one enter into abstraction on taking leave of the sensible. What is involved is two aspects, on two different levels, of one and the same process. In this way, the idea is established of a perception or knowledge through the *heart (ma'rifah qalbiyah),* firstly and expressly formulated by the Imams, and alluded to by the Quranic verse 53:11, in the context of the Prophet's first vision: "The [servant's] heart does not refute that which it has seen'. And again: 'For indeed it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts, which are within the bosoms, that grow blind.'(22:46)

Because what is involved is the same Manifestation at different levels of eminence, whether by means of the senses or in some other way—a Manifestation whose highest form is the vision of the Angel 'projecting' knowledge into the heart in a waking state, in a vision *similar to* the vision of the eyes—it could be said that, according to the schema of prophetic gnosiology, the philosopher does not see the Angel but 'intelligizes' through him, to an extent which depends upon his own efforts. The *awliya',* the Imams, hear him through spiritual audition. The prophets see him. In Mulla Sadra as in the other authors, the comparison which is constantly being made is with the phenomenon of mirrors. There is a veil between the mirror of the heart and the *Tabula secreta [lawh mahfuz)* on which all things are imprinted. The

epiphany of knowledge, from the mirror of the *Tabula secreta* into the other mirror of the heart, is like the reflection of the image of a mirror in another mirror facing it. The veil between the two mirrors is lifted, sometimes because it is removed by hand (as the philosophers try to do), sometimes because the wind begins to blow. 'In the same way it comes about that the breeze of divine grace blows; then the veil is lifted from before the eye of the heart *('ayn al-qalb).'*

The situation is best summed up in the following lines by Mulla Sadra: 'Thus the knowledge that comes from inspiration *{ilham,* the knowledge possessed by the *nabis* and the *awliya')* does not differ from the knowledge that is acquired through effort *(iktisab,* the knowledge of the philosophers) either as regards the actual reality of Knowing, or as regards its seat (the heart), or as regards its cause (the angel, the Pen, Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, the active Intelligence); but it does differ from it as regards the removal of the veil, although this is not dependent on man's choice. Similarly, the divine communication made to the prophet {*wahy)* does not differ from inspiration *(ilham)* in any of these ways, but only as regards the *vision* of the Angel who confers knowledge. For knowledge through God is only actualized in our hearts through the intermediary of the Angels, as the Quranic verse says: 'It is not vouchsafed to any mortal that God should speak to him save by a communication from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger.' (42:50-51)

5. Prophetic gnosiology, then, includes in its scope both what is the habitual concern of the philosopher, and all that concerns hierognosis: the modes of higher knowledge, the perception of the supra-sensible, and visionary apperceptions. In explaining the postulates of this gnosiology, Mulla Sadra brings out the essential convergence between it and the gnosiology of the *ishraq* (see below, chapter VII), in the sense that the authentification of prophetic visions and of perceptions of the supra-sensible requires the recognition of a third faculty of knowledge, lying between sense-perception and pure intellection of the intelligible world. This is the reason why such importance is accorded to imaginative consciousness and to imaginative perception as the organ of perception of a world which is peculiar to it, the *mundus imaginalis* ('alam *al-mithal);* and at the same time, in opposition to the general tendency of the philosophers, this organ is acknowledged to be a pure psycho-spiritual faculty, independent of the perishable physical organ-

ism. We will come back to this in connection with al-Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra. For the moment, let us take note of the fact that the prophetology of the Imams implies the necessity of the triad of universes (sensible, imaginative, intelligible) corresponding to the anthropological triad of body, soul and spirit.

The demonstration of this fact is strengthened by the thesis which affirms that the reality of any act of knowledge is quite different from what it is believed to be by the purely exotericist scholar. Indeed, even when it is a case of the normal perception of an external, sensible object, it cannot be said that what the soul sees is a form which exists within external matter: such is not the nature of sense-perception, and such a form is not the object of it. The object of this perception is actually the forms that the soul sees with the eyes of imaginative consciousness. The forms in the external world are causes of the appearance of a form which 'symbolizes with them' *{mumathalah, tamaththul).* In reality, the object perceived through the senses is this symbolizing form. The production of the symbolizing form may be occasioned by the *external* world, in which case one is *elevated* to its level from the level of the organs of sense; or it may be produced from *within,* in which case one *descends* to its level from the level of spiritual intelligibilities through the activity of the Imagination, which makes these intelligibilities present by endowing them with imaginative form. But in whichever way this form is produced in the imaginative consciousness, it is the real object of vision *(mushahadah).* There is, however, one difference: in the first case, because the external appearance *{zahir)* may not accord with the inner *{batin),* a mistake could occur. In the second case, there can be no mistake. The *form-image* born of a contemplation which is focused on the supra-sensible world, and of the illumination of the world of the *malakut,* 'imitates' divine realities to perfection.

In this manner, prophetic gnosiology leads to a theory of imaginative knowledge and symbolic forms. As a corollary to this, Mulla Sadra, demonstrating the role of the *vital pneuma or ruhhayawani,* elaborates • mystical psycho-physiology—a development of the criteria already proposed by the Imams—which makes it possible to distinguish cases of demoniac suggestion and in general what we know today as schizophrenia. The three orders of perception proper to the *wali,* the *nabi* and the *rasul* are homologized respectively with the three members

of the triad of spirit, soul and body. The prophet of Islam combines in himself all three of these perceptions. It is unfortunately impossible to give here an idea of the richness of this teaching. It consolidates the notions of spiritual vision *(ru'yah 'aqliyah)* and of spiritual hearing *(sama' 'aqli, sama' hissi batini,* sensible inner hearing), the *heart* likewise possessing the five senses of a metaphysical sensibility. It is this sensibility which perceives the *taklim and the tahdith* (the conversation) of the Angel or Holy Spirit, that is invisible to the physical senses. This, precisely, is the *ta'lim batini,* the esoteric teaching or initiation in the proper sense of the term—that is to say, absolutely personal, without the mediation of any collectivity or magisterium, and which is also the source of what is called *hadith qudsi:* an *inspired recital* of the spiritual world, in which God speaks in the first person. These *hadith qudsi are* a unique treasure-house of Islamic spirituality; but it is only possible to recognize their 'authority' through the gnosiology whose origins we have indicated. Ultimately, this gnosiology explains the continuation, up to the day of the Resurrection, of that 'secret, esoteric prophecy' *(nubuwah batiniyah),* deprived of which the Earth of mankind would perish. For only *hierohistory* possesses the secret of a prophetic philosophy which is not a dialectic of the Spirit, but an epiphany of the Holy Spirit.

6. Herein lies the meaning and the strength of the contrast between the 'official sciences', acquired from the external world by means of effort and human teaching (*'ulum kasblyah rasmiyah),* and 'knowledge in the true sense', received by way of a spiritual heritage (*'ulum irthiyah haqiqiyah),* obtained gradually or all at once through divine instruction. Haydar Amuli is among those who have dwelt at greatest length on this theme, showing why the knowledge in the second category was able to flourish independently of the first, but not the other way around. It is not so much the philosophers, the *falasifah,* who are being envisaged, for in a masterly summing-up of the philosophical situation in Islam, Haydar Amuli brings together the evidence of many: Kamal Kashani, Sadr al-Din Turkah Isfahan!, the two al-Bahranis, Afdal al-Din al-Kashani, Nasir al-Din Tusi, al-Ghazali, even Avicenna. Indeed, Avicenna says that we know only the properties, the inherences and the accidents of things, not their essence *(haqiqah);* even when we say of the First Being that his existence is necessary, we are still speaking of an inherent property, not of his essence. In short, all the philosophers

mentioned here are at one in acknowledging that speculative dialectic does not lead to knowledge of oneself, to knowledge, that is, of the soul and its essence. This Shiite critique of philosophy is above all constructive. Certainly, Haydar Amuli is more severe when it comes to the representatives of dialectial theology *(kalam)* in Islam. The pious Ash'arites, as well as the rationalist Mu'tazilites (see below, ch. IE), bandying their theses and antitheses, lapse into self-contradiction and even into agnosticism. But when Haydar Amuli condemns the feebleness of the 'official sciences', he has principally in mind all those who reduce Islamic thought to questions of law, to the science of the fi*qh,* be they Shiites or Sunnis—especially if they are Shiites, for they are then responsible for such a state of affairs.

Only those who are known as the *ilahlyun,* the Sages of God, the 'theosophers', have had and will have a share in the inheritance of this knowledge, whose modes have been described as *wahy, ilham* and *kashf.* This knowledge, as a spiritual heritage, differs from the knowledge acquired from the external world in that it is knowledge of the soul—knowledge, that is to say, of oneself; and one's share in the 'inheritance' increases in proportion to one's spiritual development, not merely through the acquisition of technical knowledge. Knowledge through *wahy* has come to an end (with the ending of 'legislative prophecy'); the way of knowledge through *ilham* and *kashf* remains open (no matter where this statement occurs, it is always Shiite in tenor). The knowledge termed *kashf,* or mystical unveiling, can be purely mental *(ma 'nawi),* and can also be the perception of an imaginative form *(kashf surf).* The meaning of the science which is knowledge of oneself is best expressed in a *hadith.* As we said above (A, 3), Shiite theology, in opposition to other schools, rules out all human possibility of 'seeing God', and this position is in accordance with God's reply to Moses {'Never canst thou see Me'; Quran 7:143). Nevertheless, In the *hadith* of the vision, the Prophet testifies that 'I have seen my God in the most beautiful of forms'. The question which this presents it unswered by the eighth Imam, 'Ali al-Rida (d. 203/818), and his reply paves the way for the meditation of the spiritual masters. The human form, being in the divine image, is more fitted even than the Burning Bush to be the place of epiphany, the divine *mazhar.* In reality, What Muhammad saw was simply the form of his own soul, which was the 'most beautiful of forms' precisely because it was the form

of the 'eternal Muhammadan Reality', the celestial Anthropos—whose esoteric aspect is the Imam. All vision of God is the vision of his human Form. One immediately grasps the implication of the aphorism quoted above: 'He who knows himself *(nafsahu,* his soul) knows his Lord'—that is to say, his Imam—the corollary to which is that 'to die without knowing one's Imam is to die the death of those who are oblivious'. The Prophet was able to say, 'You will see your Lord as you see the Moon on a night when it is full'. And the first Imam, in a remark with clear evangelic overtones, said, 'He who has seen me has seen God.' One of his conversations with his follower Kumayi ends with the words, 'A light rises at the dawn of pre-eternity; it shines on the temples of the *tawhid.'*

7. Thus, when speaking of *irthiyah* knowledge (knowledge received in the way that an heir receives the inheritance due to him), it is important to know to whom the Prophet's utterances, such as the following, can be applied: 'The sages are the heirs of the prophets'; 'The sages of my community are homologous with the prophets of Israel'; 'The ink of the sages is more precious than the blood of martyrs.' *A priori* Haydar Amuli excludes all learned exotericists, any interpretation which, for example, would make the 'four imams', the founders of the four great Sunni juridical rituals, the heirs of the prophets (see above, A, 4). They themselves never, in fact, made such a claim, and their knowledge is all of the type 'acquired from the external world' (whether or not it makes use of syllogisms). *Irthiyah* knowledge presupposes a spiritual affiliation *(nisbah ma'nawiyah),* the prototype of which is the case of Salman the Persian, because it was said to him that 'you are a part of us, members of the House of the Prophet' *(anta minna ahl al-bayt).* This House, says our author, is not the external family of wives and children, but 'the family of Knowledge, gnosis and wisdom' *(bayt al-'ihn wa-al-ma'rifah wa-al-hikmah).* From the beginning, this prophetic House is constituted by the Twelve Imams, who together, even before they appeared on earth, were the foundation of relationship and affiliation. For, as we observed above, when refuting those who have accused Twelver Shiism of founding its Imamology on carnal descent, such descent is quite insufficient to form the basis of the Imamate of the Imams. The sixth Imam repeated, 'My *walayah* in relation to the Amir of believers (the first Imam) is more precious than the bond of my carnal descent from him *(wiladati minhu).'* As

we saw, the pleroma of the Twelve pre-exists its terrestrial epiphany, and the earthly consanguinity or kinship between them is the *sign* of their *walayah,* not its basis.

This is why it is they who transmit the knowledge which is a 'prophetic heritage', and through this transmission, as we saw, the 'esoteric prophecy' or *walayah* will continue to exist until the day of the Resurrection. Haydar Amuli, analysing the first of the phrases cited above, warns us against the pitfalls of the Arabic form. He translates it as follows: the sages are those who are heirs to the prophets. Equally, those who are not heirs are not sages. The quality of being an heir means that the good which is received is not acquired from outside, but is the trust which comes back to us anew. It is true that to enter into possession of this trust may require effort *(ijtihad)* and spiritual discipline. But one must not be misled. It is as with a treasure buried underground which a father has left to his heir: the effort removes the obstacle, but it does not produce the treasure. Our author concludes: 'In the same way, the *Verus Adam (Adam haqiqi)* left behind him, *beneath the earth of their hearts,* the treasure of the theosophies. And that is the meaning of the Quranic verse: If they would but truly observe the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed unto them from their Lord, they would indeed partake of blessings from above them and from beneath their feet'. (5:66) In this way, we come back to the idea of the trust confided to man, the trust of the divine secrets (33:72), which is the basis of Shiite esotericism (see above, A, 1), and the reason why its history cannot but be a sacred history.

6. Hierohistory and metahistory

1. The name *hierohistory here* signifies the configurations implicit in the idea of *cycles (dawr,* plural *adwar)* of prophecy and of the *walayah*—a history, that is, which does not consist in the observation, recording or critique of empirical facts, but derives from a mode of perception that goes beyond the materiality of empirical facts. Such perception is of the supra-sensible world, the gradations of which were explained to us in the preceding section on gnosiology. *Hierognosis* and *hierohistory* are related. Facts perceived in this manner possess, to be sure, the reality of events; but these events do not possess the reality of the physical world and its people—the events with which our history books are filled, since it is out of them that 'history is made'.

We are dealing with *spiritual facts in* the strict sense of the word. They take place in *metahistory,* as in the case of the day of the Covenant between God and the human race; or else they *show through* the course taken by the things of this world: they are both the invisible aspect of the event and the invisible event which eludes profane empirical perception because implicit in it is the 'theophanic perception' which alone is able to apprehend a *mazhar* or theophanic form. The prophets and the Imams are perceived as such only on the level of a hierohistory, of a sacred history. The complete cycle of this hierohistory—the prophetic periods and the post-prophetic cycle of the Imamate or *walayah*—forms a structure which is not that of some evolutionary process, but which takes us back to the origin. Thus, hierohistory begins by envisaging that which constitutes the 'descent', in order to conclude by describing the 're-ascent', the closing of the cycle.

Mulla Sadra, expounding the teaching of the Imams, explains how that which 'descended' (was epiphanized) in the heart of the Prophet was first and foremost the *haqa'iq,* the spiritual truths and realities of the Quran, *before* the text took on a visible form made up of words and letters. These spiritual realities are themselves the 'Light of the Word', *nur al-kalam,* already present before the Angel manifested himself in visible form and 'dictated' the text of the Book. The spiritual truth was already there, and this, precisely, is the Prophet's *walayah,* which his prophetic mission presupposes and which is therefore anterior to it in his person. That is why the Prophet, as we saw, says, 'Ali (the *haqa'iq* or esoteric aspect) and I are one and the same light.' Thus, since prophecy began on earth with Adam *{cf.* in this connection Ismaili hierohistory; see below, B, I, sects. 2 and 3), we need to clarify the difference between the divine revelation granted to the *last* prophet-Messenger, and those revelations which were granted to previous prophets. It can be said of each of the previous prophets that a *nabi* came, and that with him came a Light proceeding from the Book that he brought. Of the last Messenger it can be said that a *nabi came* who was of himself a Light, and that with him he had a Book. In the case of the latter, it is his heart, his secret *{batin),* which illuminates the Book; and this *batin* or esoteric aspect is, precisely, the *walayah,* that which constitutes the essence of Imamology. For this reason, and in contrast to other communities, it is said of those who are Faithful in the true sense that 'God has *written* faith upon their hearts', (58:22)

because faith *{iman)* becomes perfect only when it attains to this *batin.* In order to perceive fully the prophetic reality, one must have gained access to this interiority and to the *events* which take place in it; and this is quite different from what is gained by empirical perception from the *facts* of external history.

2. We spoke earlier (see above, A, 3) of the relationship between the Prophet and the eternal 'Muhammadan Reality' *{Haqiqah muhammadiyah),* the celestial *Anthropos* whose epiphanic form, or *mazhar,* he is. We see from this that there is no question of an entry into history, of a *historicization* of the divine, which is implicit in the Christian idea of the Incarnation. The epiphanic function *(mazhariyah)* demands that a distinction should always be made between, on the one hand, the attributes of the eternal *haqiqah* whose Manifestation is actualized only for the heart and, on the other hand, the attributes of the external appearance, which is visible to all the world, whether or not they are believers. The Prophet, of course, is the *mazhar* of the spiritual and corporeal worlds, and also the 'meeting-place of the two seas' *(majma' al-bahrayn).* Nevertheless, when he speaks 'from the side' of the sea representing his humanity, he cannot but say, 'I am only a mortal like you. The inspiration has come to me that your God is only One God'. (18:110) This is why we pointed out above that, although their prophetology and Imamology confronted Shiite thinkers with problems analogous to those of Christology, the idea they had of the *mazhariyah* (like a mirror in which the image appears without being incarnate in it) always guided them towards solutions which differed from those reached by official Christian dogma. It is to this supra-sensible reality, 'trans-apparent' through its *mazhar,* that the idea of cycles is related; and since a cycle exists, there also exist two limits to which each of the events occurring in spiritual history his reference. These two limits form the threshold of *metahistory* (or trans-history); it is this metahistory that bestows meaning on history, because it makes it into a hierohistory. In the absence of metahistory—that is to say, in the absence of anteriority 'in Heaven'—and in the absence of an eschatology, to speak of a 'sense of history' is absurd.

Centred as it is on the perception of theophanic forms, the sense of origin and end differs profoundly from the 'historical awareness', whose advent was linked with the advent of Christianity, with the

Incarnation of God in history at a specific date. The problems created over the centuries by this view of things for Christian religious philosophy have not been present in Islamic thought. For this reason, our own philosophy should take note of the testimony of the prophetic philosophy of Shiite Islam and, in the light of this testimony, reflect upon itself.

As we observed at the start (see above, I, 1), the awareness of Christian man is centred on certain facts, such as the Incarnation and the Redemption, to which it is possible to assign historical dates. By contrast, the awareness that the *mu'min* or believer has of his origins, and of the future on which the meaning of his present life depends, is centred on facts which are *real,* but which belong to metahistory. The sense of his origin is perceived in the question which God, on the 'Day of the Covenant', asked of Adamic humanity, before this humanity was transferred to the terrestrial plane. No system of chronology can fix the *date* of this 'Day of the Covenant', which takes place during the *time* of that pre-existence of souls which Shiism in general affirms. The other limit for the Shiite, be he a thinker or a simple believer, is that of the coming of the Imam who for the present is hidden—the Imam-Mahdi, the Shiite idea of whom is quite different from the idea of the Mahdi held by the rest of Islam. The present, whose denominator is the hidden Imam, is the time of his occultation *{ghaybah);* and by the same token, 'his time' bears a different hallmark from what, for us, is the time of history. Only a prophetic philosophy can encompass it, because such a philosophy is essentially eschatological. Between these two limits—the 'prologue in Heaven' and the denouement which opens onto 'another time' through the coming of the awaited Imam—the drama of human existence, lived by every believer, is played out. The movement of the 'time of occultation' towards the denouement brought about by the *parousia* is the cycle of the *walayah* following on the cycle of prophecy.

3. It is unanimously agreed *(cf.* above, A, 3) that the prophet of Islam was the Seal of prophecy. There will be no other prophet after him; or, more accurately, there will be no other Messenger charged with the mission of proclaiming a *shari'ah,* or divine Law, to humankind. We are now confronted with the following dilemma. Either religious awareness centres, from generation to generation, on this prophetic *past* which is now over, doing so because it perceives in the Book

only a code of social and moral life, and because the 'time of prophecy' *(zaman al-nubuwah)* is consummated in this literal and altogether exoteric meaning; or, alternatively, this prophetic past itself is *to come,* because the text of the Book conceals a hidden spiritual meaning—an alternative which postulates the spiritual initiation realized in the ministry of the Imams. The cycle of prophecy *(da'irat al-nubuwah)* is succeeded by the cycle of the *walayah,* a concept which remains fundamentally Shiite. Many remarks made by the fifth and sixth Imams refer to the principle of *ta'wil,* thereby eluding the trap of historicism and legalism before the terms even existed. The following is an example of this: 'When those on account of whom such and such a verse had been revealed are dead, is the verse also dead? If this is so, nothing now remains of the Quran. No, the Quran is alive. It will continue on its course as long as Heaven and Earth endure, because it enshrines a sign and a guide for every man and every group to come.'

We have seen how Mulla Sadra, in his commentary on the texts of the Imams, systematized all that had been said on this theme (see above, A, 5). What is now over is legislative prophecy alone *(nubuwah al-tashri'),* and what has been abolished is the use of the term *nabi.* In saying that prophecy is temporary, whereas the *walayah* endures perpetually, it is this legislative prophecy that is envisaged. For if we consider not the modalities particular to the condition of Messenger, but those of the *nabi* pure and simple, as we know them from gnosiology, they are seen to be common to the Imams and the *awliya'* in the broadest sense. This is why what continues to exist in Islam under the name of *walayah* is in fact an esoteric prophecy *(nubuwah batiniyah)*—a form of prophecy, moreover, deprived of which earthly humanity would collapse. It goes without saying that in the eyes of the orthodox Sunnis, such an affirmation appeared revolutionary *(cf.* the meaning of al-Suhrawardi's trial, below, ch. VII).

Basing itself on this fundamental intuition, Shiite prophetology elaborated the schema of an impressive hierohistory, in which it is possible to discern the precursor of a 'general theology of the history of religions'. Haydar Amuli illustrated it with his complex and detailed diagrams, and Shams al-Din al-Lahiji developed the theme at length. From the start there is a concept which is common to both Twelver Shiite and Ismaili prophetology: the concept of eternal prophecy, which is no other than the *walayah,* and which originates in the Pleroma (see

below, B, 1, sects. 2ff.). The absolute, essential and primordial prophecy belongs to the supreme Spirit (the celestial Anthropos, the First Intelligence, the eternal Muhammadan Reality), whom God sends first towards the universal Soul, before sending it to individual souls in order to apprise them of the divine Names and Attributes *{nubuwah al-ta'rif).* For our Islamic thinkers, the theme is an extension of the theme of the *Verus Propheta,* the true Prophet who, in the Judaeo-Christian prophetology of the Ebionites, 'hastens from prophet to prophet until he comes to his resting-place'. In this case, his 'resting-place' is the last prophet, the prophet of Islam.

4. The totality of this prophecy is pictured as a circle whose circumference is constituted by a series of points, each of which represents a prophet, a partial moment of prophecy. The starting-point of the prophetic cycle on earth was the existence of the terrestrial Adam. From *nabi to nabi {according* to tradition, there are 124,000 of them), from Messenger to Messenger (of whom there are 313), from great prophet to great prophet {of whom there were six, if not seven), the cycle progresses up to the existence of Jesus, who was the last great partial prophet. With the coming of Muhammad the circle is completed and closed. As the *khatim,* the Seal who recapitulates all previous prophets, Muhammad is the epiphany of the eternal prophetic Reality, the supreme Spirit, the celestial Anthropos. The supreme Spirit is epiphanized in him through the very essence of prophecy. This is why he can say, 'I am the first of prophets with respect to creation (the supreme Spirit pre-exists the universe), and the last of them with respect to mission and Manifestation'. From Adam to Jesus, each prophet was a particular *mazhar,* a partial reality of the eternal prophetic Reality. The fundamental reality, or *haqiqah,* which exists in each prophet as the basis of the prophetic qualification, is the subtle organ *[latifah)* of the heart, which is engendered in the hierogamy *(izdiwaj)* of Spirit and Soul, and which constitutes the place in each prophet of the 'descent' of the Spirit (this is what is meant in the deepest sense by the Angel as *heart).* One face of the heart is turned towards the Spirit, which is the source of its visions, and one face is turned towards the Soul, the place of its knowledge. "The heart is the throne of the Spirit in the world of Mystery.'

Since the *walayah is* the interior or esoteric aspect of prophecy, and as such the constitutive component of the Imamate, the hierohistoric

schema must embrace prophetology and Imamology in their totality. The final term of the cycle of prophecy coincides with the initial term of the cycle of the *walayah.* The diagrams of Haydar Amuli which illustrate the relationship between *walayah* and *nubuwah* show the cycle of the *walayah* as a circle *inside* the circle representing the prophetic cycle. In effect, the cycle of the *walayah* represents the cycle of interiorization, for the Muhammadan Imamate is the esoteric aspect of all previous prophetic religions. This is why the cycle of the *walayah* prepares the way not for the advent of a new *shari'ah,* but for the advent of the *qa'im* the Imam of the Resurrection.

We now know that what is called *walayah* in Islam used to be called simply *nubuwah* during the pre-prophetic periods; that is, it did not comprise the mission of a Messenger. Just as Muhammad had his twelve Imams, each of the six (or five) great prophet-Messengers before him (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus) had his twelve Imams or *awsiya'* (spiritual heirs). The twelve Imams of Christ are not precisely those whom we know as the twelve apostles, but the twelve who took on the task of transmitting the prophetic message until the advent of the last prophet. Just as the Prophet Muhammad, as the Seal of prophecy, was the *mazhar* of prophecy in the absolute sense, the first Imam, Muhammad's *wasi or* heir, was the *mazhar and* the Seal of the *walayah in* its absolute sense. The partial manifestations of the *walayah* began with Seth, the son of the Imam Adam, and will culminate with the twelfth Imam or *Madhi*—at present the hidden Imam—as Seal of the particular *walayah* during the final period of prophecy. Each of the *awliya'* is in the same relationship to the Seal of the *walayah* as is each of the *nabis* to the Seal of prophecy. It is thus clear that the line of prophecy is inseparable from the line of its spiritual exegesis. It is by means of such exegesis that the 're-ascension' of prophecy to its origin is accomplished.

5. This hierohistory in its entirety is of a perfect coherence. The Muhammadan Imamate, in the persons of those who are the exemplifications on earth of the pleroma of the Twelve, is the consummation of the prophetic religions, for it leads these religions back to their own inwardness. Shiism, the esotericism of Islam, perfects all other esotericisms. The threshold of legislative prophecy is barred; the threshold of the *walayah* remains open until the day of the Resurrection.

It is clear that this theme is fundamental. Even in cases when it is

displaced, it may still be recognized. Thus, even though the mystical theosophy of Ibn al-'Arabi (see part II) was immediately adopted by the Shiite theosophers, who found their own vision reaffirmed in it, there was one point of capital importance over which it aroused opposition, and over which its Shiite followers (Haydar Amuli, Kamal Kashani, Sadr al-Din Turkah Isfahani, and so on) found it impossible to compromise. Ibn al-'Arabi transfers the quality of Seal of the *walayah* in its absolute and general sense from the Imam to Jesus, and possibly attributes to himself the quality of being the Seal of the Muhammadan *walayah.* We cannot dwell on this here, but one can perceive what dislocation and incoherence this involved for the schema described above, since the cycle of the *walayah* presupposes the fulfilment of the prophetic cycle. Shiite commentators have not been able to explain why Ibn al-'Arabi makes this transference. In any case, this endeavour draws attention to the fact that Imamology and a certain type of Christology possess homologous functions. But it remains true that the sense of eschatological expectation, as the *ethos* of Shiite awareness, presupposes that the Seal of the *walayah* can only be the Muhammadan Imamate, in the dual person of the first and twelfth Imam; for the Muhammadan Imamate is the manifestation of the esoteric aspect of the eternal prophetic Reality.

7. The hidden Imam and eschatology

1. This theme—the culminating theme of Imamology and its sacred history—is one of particular attraction for prophetic philosophy. It is unquestionable that the idea of the hidden Imam was projected upon several Imams in turn, but it could take definite shape only around the person of the twelfth, with whom the pleroma of the Imamate is fulfilled. There is a considerable body of literature about him, both in Persian and in Arabic. (The sources of this literature have been assembled by Saffar al-Qummi, d. 290/902, reporter-witness of the eleventh Imam; al-Kulayni and his follower al-Nu'mani, fourth/tenth century; Ibn Babuyah, d. 381/991, who owed his information to a contemporary witness, Hasan ibn Muktib; al-Shaykh al-Mufid, d. 413/1022; Muhammad ibn Hasan Tusi, d. 460/1068. The principal traditions are collected in volume XIII of al-Majlisi's Encyclopaedia. Even in our day, books on this theme appear frequently; for example, *Ilzam al-Nasib,* by Shaykh 'Ali al-Yazdi, *al-Kitab al-'abqari*, by

'Allamah al-Nihawandi, and so on. Only a few pages of this body of literature have been translated.)

The fundamental concept meditated by the representatives of Shiite philosophy (*'irfan-ishi'i)* is the one already described: just as the cycle of prophecy culminates in the Seal of the prophets, so the *walayah,* which runs parallel to prophecy from period to period, possesses a double Seal in the Muhammadan Imamate: the Seal of the general *walayah* in the person of the first Imam, and the Seal of the Muhammadan *walayah,* the esoteric aspect of the previous esotericisms, in the person of the twelfth Imam. As a master of Iranian Shiite Sufism, 'Aziz al-Din al-Nasafi (sixth/thirteenth century), a disciple of Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah, puts it: 'The millions of prophets who appeared prior to it successively contributed to the establishment of the theophanic form which is prophecy, and Muhammad consummated it. Now it is the turn of the *walayah* (spiritual Initiation) to be manifested and to make manifest the esoteric realities. The man of God in whose person the *walayah is* made manifest is the *sahib al-zaman,* the Imam of this time.'

The term *sahib al-zaman* (he who rules over this time) is characteristically used to designate the hidden Imam, 'invisible to the senses, but present to the hearts of those who believe in him'. He polarizes both the devotion of the pious Shiite and the philosopher's meditation, and was the child of the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-'Askari, and the Byzantine princess Narkes (Narkissa). He is also known as the awaited Imam *(al-imam al-muntazar),* the Mahdi (the Shiite idea of whom differs profoundly, as we saw, from the Sunni idea), the *Qa'im al Qiyamah,* the Imam of the Resurrection. The hagiography of the twelfth Imam abounds in archetypal and symbolical features concerning his birth and his occultation *(ghaybah).* We should point out at once that historical criticism would be quite at sea here, because what is involved is something altogether different, which we have described as *hierohistory.* Here above all our approach should be that of the phenomenologist: we must discover the *aims of* Shiite awareness In order to share its vision, the vision which it has been acquiring ever since it began.

2. We must confine ourselves here to the essential facts. We recall that the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-'Askari, was kept more or less a prisoner by the 'Abbasid police in the camp at Samarra, about 100 kilometres north of Baghdad, and died there at the age of twenty-eight,

in 260/874. On the very same day his young son, then aged five or a little over, disappeared, and initiated thereby what is known as the *lesser Occultation (al-ghaybah al-sughra).* The simultaneity of these occurrences is rich in meanings from the mystical point of view. The Imam Hasan al-'Askari is seen by his followers as the symbol of their spiritual task. As soon as he leaves this world, the child of his soul becomes invisible; and it is to this child's *parousia,* his 'return to the present', that the souls of his followers must give birth.

The occultation of the twelfth Imam takes place on two occasions. The lesser occultation lasted for seventy years, during which the hidden Imam had four representatives, or *na'ib,* in turn, through whom his Shiites were able to communicate with him. In a last letter, he ordered the last of them, 'Ali al-Samarri, not to choose a successor, for now the time of the Great Occultation *{al-ghaybah al-kubra)* had arrived. The last words of his last *na'ib* (d. 330/942) were, 'Henceforth this is the business of God alone'. This was the beginning of the secret history of the twelfth Imam. To be sure, it has nothing to do with what we call the historicity of material facts; nevertheless, it has dominated Shiite consciousness for more than ten centuries—indeed, it *is* the history itself of this consciousness. The Imam's final message is a warning against any imposture, any pretext which seeks to put an end to its eschatological expectation, to the imminence of the Awaited One (which was the drama of Babism and Baha'ism). Until the hour of his Advent, the hidden Imam is visible only in dreams, or in personal manifestations having the character of visionary events (the subject of many recitals), and which for that reason do not suspend the 'time of the occultation', nor enter the material web of 'objective' history. Because the Imamate is the esoteric aspect of all prophetic Revelations, the Imam must of necessity be present both in the past and in the future. The meaning of this *occultation* and of the expected advent has occupied philosophical meditation down to our day, particularly in the Shaykhi school.

3. The concept of the hidden Imam has led the masters of the Shaykhi school into a deeper appreciation of the meaning and mode of this invisible presence. Here again an essential part is played by the *mundus imaginalis {'alam al-mithal).* To see the Imam on the celestial Earth of Hurqalya *(cf.* the Earth of Light, *Terra lucida,* in Manichaeism), is to see him where he truly is, in a world which is simultaneously

concrete and supra-sensible, and to see him with the organ appropriate to the perception of such a world. Shaykhism has outlined what could be called a phenomenology of the *ghaybah.* A figure like that of the twelfth Imam does not appear and disappear according to the laws of material historicity. He is a supernatural being, typifying the same profound aspirations as those which, in a certain type of Christianity, correspond to the idea of a pure *caro spiritualis Christi.* The decision of the Imam as to whether or not he can appear to men is dependent on the men in question. His appearance is the very meaning of their renewal, and in this lies, ultimately, the deepest significance of the Shiite idea of the occultation and the appearance. Men have concealed the Imam from themselves behind a veil, have made themselves incapable of seeing him, because they have lost or paralysed the organs of 'theophanic perception', of that 'knowledge through the heart' which is defined in the gnosiology of the Imams. It is meaningless, therefore, to speak of the Manifestation of the hidden Imam as long as men are incapable of recognizing him. The *parousia* is not an event which may suddenly erupt one fine day; it is something that happens day after day in the consciousness of the Shiite faithful. Here, then, esotericism shatters the rigidity of which legalistic Islam is so often accused, and its disciples are caught up in the ascending movement of the cycle of the *walayah.*

In a famous *hadith* the Prophet said, 'If the earth had only one day of existence left to it, God would prolong that day until a man of my posterity, whose name will be my name, and his surname my surname, manifests himself; he will fill the Earth, filled till then with violence and oppression, with harmony and justice.' The day which is prolonged is the time *of the ghaybah,* and this clear proclamation has been echoed through all the ages and stages of Shiite consciousness. What the sages perceived is that the advent of the Imam would make manifest the hidden meaning of all the Revelations. The *ta'wil* will triumph, enabling the human race to discover its unity, just as, throughout the time of the *ghaybah,* the secret of the only true ecumenism will have been contained in esotericism. This is why the great Sufi shaykh and Iranian Shiite already mentioned, Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah (seventh/thirteenth century), declared, 'The hidden Imam will not appear before the time when people are able to understand, even from the very thongs of his sandals, the secrets of the tawhid'—that is to say, the esoteric

meaning of the divine Unity.

He is this secret: the awaited Imam, the Perfect Man, the Integral Man, 'for it is he who enables all things to speak, and, in becoming alive, each thing becomes a threshold of the spiritual world'. The Advent-to-come of the Imam presupposes, therefore, the metamorphosis of men's hearts; on the faith of his followers depends the progressive fulfilment of this *parousia*, through their own act of being. Hence is derived the whole ethic of the *javan-mard*, the 'spiritual knight', an idea in which is contained all the *ethos* of Shiism, the paradox of its pessimism whose very desperation is an affirmation of hope, because its vision encompasses, from one end to the other, the horizon of metahistory: both the pre-existence of souls, and the Resurrection *[qiyamah)* which is the transfiguration of all things. The ethic of ancient Zoroastrian Persia was already determined by the anticipation of this same Resurrection.

Until this Resurrection, the time of the 'Great Occultation' is the time of a divine presence *incognito;* and because it is *incognito*, it can never become an object or a thing, and it defies all socialization of the spiritual. By the same token, the members of the esoteric mystical hierarchies *(nujaba'* and *nuqaba'*, Nobles and spiritual Princes, the *awtad* and the *abdal)* also remain *incognito.* These hierarchies are well-known to Sufism, but it must never be forgotten that, conceptually and historically, they presuppose the Shiite idea of the *walayah;* for the hierarchies originate in him who is the *pole of poles*, the Imam, and they pertain to the esoteric aspect of prophecy which has its source in the Imam. Moreover, their names feature in the discourses of the fourth and fifth Imams; and the first Imam, in a conversation with his disciple Kumayi, makes precise reference to the succession of God's Sages who, from century to century, remain largely unknown to the majority of men. This was later to be known as *silsilat al-'irfan*, the 'succession of gnosis'; and it consists of all those who, from the time of Seth, the son of Adam, down to the Muhammadan Imams, and including all those who acknowledge them as Guides, have been transmitters of the esoteric aspect of eternal prophecy. However, the essential reality of their being, their *haqiqah*, does not belong to the visible world, dominated as it is by forces of constraint. They make up a pure *Ecclesia spiritualis,* and are known to God alone.

4. As we know, the Prophet Muhammad was identified, as Mani had

been, with the Paraclete. But because of the homology which exists between the Seal of prophecy and the Seal of the *walayah*, Imamology retains the idea of the Paraclete as a vision to come. Several Shiite authors, among whom are Kamal Kashani and Haydar Amuli, explicitly identify the twelfth Imam, the awaited Imam, with the Paraclete whose advent is proclaimed in the Gospel of John to which they allude. This is so because the coming of the Imam-Paraclete will inaugurate the reign of the purely spiritual meaning of the divine Revelations—that is to say, the true religion which is the eternal *walayah.* For this reason, the reign of the Imam is the prelude to the Great Resurrection (*qiyamat al-qiyamat.* As Shams al-Din al-Lahiji puts it, the resurrection of the dead is the condition on which the end and aim of the existence of beings may be realized. Our authors know that, philosophically speaking, the annihilation of the world is conceivable; but their Imamology challenges any such eventuality. Both before and after Islam, the eschatological horizons of Iran have remained constant. Shiite eschatology is dominated by the figures of the *qa'im* and his companions, as Zoroastrian eschatology was by the figures of *Saoshyant* and his companions. It does not dissociate the idea of the 'lesser resurrection', the individual exodus, from that of the 'Great Resurrection', the coming of the new Aion.

Attention has just been drawn to the identification, established by Shiite thinkers, between the awaited Imam and the Paraclete. This identification reveals a striking convergence between the most profound concept in Shiism and the whole body of philosophical thought in the West which, from the Joachimites of the thirteenth century down to our day, has been guided by the *paracletic* idea, inspiring modes of thought and action with a view to the reign of the Holy Spirit. The consequences of this fact, once it has come to be noticed, could be enormous. As we have explained, the fundamental idea is that the awaited Imam will not bring with him a new revealed Book—a new Law—but will reveal the hidden meaning of all the Revelations, because, as the Integral Man *[al-insan al-kamil, Anthropos teleios)*, the esoteric aspect of the 'eternal prophetic Reality', he is himself the revelation of Revelations. *The parousia* of the awaited Imam signifies a plenary anthropological revelation, unfolding *within* the man who lives in the Spirit. In the final analysis, this means the revelation of the divine secret that man took on himself, the burden which, according

to Surah 33:72 of the Quran, Heaven, Earth and the mountains refused to assume. We have seen (above, A, 2) how from the beginning, from the time of the teaching of the Imams, this verse has been understood by Imamology as an allusion to its own secret, the secret of the *walayah*, for the divine mystery and the human mystery, the mystery of the *Anthropos* and of the *haqiqah muhammadiyah*, are one and the same.

Our brief sketch may conclude with this theme, its first and its last. It has been possible to envisage here only a limited number of aspects of Twelver Shiite thinking, but they will suffice to show that this thinking is essentially the 'prophetic philosophy' which arose from the premisses of Islam as a prophetic religion. But any account of Shiite thought would be incomplete if it did not indicate the role of Ismailism and Ismaili gnosis alongside that of Twelver Imamism.

B. ISMAILISM

Periods and sources: proto-Ismailism

1. A few decades ago, it would have been extremely difficult to write this chapter, so largely had the truth about Ismailism disappeared beneath the plot of a frightful 'horror story', responsibility for which lay with those discussed below in relation to Alamut. The division between the two main branches of Shiism, namely Twelver Imamism and Sevener Ismailism, was effected when the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, one of the greatest figures of them all, departed this world in 148/765. His eldest son, the Imam Isma'il, had died an untimely death before him. Would the investiture of the Imamate develop onto the latter's son, or did the Imam Ja'far have the right—making use of his prerogative as he saw fit—to transfer the investiture to another of his own sons: Musa al-Kazim, younger brother of Isma'il? In reality, this question of personages arises from something more fundamental: the perception of a transcendental structure whose typology is exemplified by the earthly figures of the Imams. This typology is what divides Twelver Shiites from Sevener Shiites.

Around the young Imam Isma'il—eponym of the term *Ismailism*—had formed a group of his enthusiastic followers whose tendencies could be described as 'ultra-Shiite' in the sense that they aimed at deriving the most radical consequences from the premisses of Shiite gnosis described above: the divine epiphany in Imamology,

the certainty that each exterior or exoteric thing corresponds to an inner, esoteric reality, and the emphasis laid on the *qiyamah* (spiritual resurrection) at the expense of the observance of the *shari'ah* (the Law or ritual). The same spirit is present in the reformed Ismailism of Alamut. All this made up the tragedy at whose centre were the moving figures of Abu al-Khattab and his companions, friends of the Imam Isma'il and disowned, externally at least, by the Imam Ja'far, an action which rent his own heart.

2. Only a few texts are left today that witness to the spiritual ferment taking place in the second/eighth century, but they suffice to show the link between ancient gnosis and Ismaili gnosis. The oldest of these texts, entitled *Umm al-Kitab* {'The Archetype of the Book'), is preserved in the archaic Persian language; whether this is the original text or a version from the Arabic, it is at any rate a faithful reflection of the ideas current wherever Shiite gnosis was given shape. The book takes the form of a conversation between the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 115/733) and three of his followers *(rawshaniyan,* 'beings of light'). From the start it is clearly reminiscent of the Gospel of the Infancy, thus already making it evident how Imamology is homologous to gnostic Christology. Among the principal motifs are the mystical science of letters (the *jafr),* practised already, and especially, in the school of Mark the Gnostic, and the groups of five, or *pentadism,* governing a cosmology which plainly contains traces of Manichaeism, and in which we can discern upon analysis a *cathenotheism* of extraordinary interest.

Another of the dominating themes is the 'seven battles of Salman' against the Enemy. Salman combines the characteristics of the archangel Michael with those of the celestial *Anthropos* in the form of a primordial theophany. He declines to accept divinity for himself, and this refusal renders him transparent to that divinity which can be worshipped only through him. As we will see later, the most exalted philosophical speculations of Ismailism see this as the secret of the esoteric *tawhid.* Deprived of theophanic figures, monotheism suffers a self-inflicted self-denial and perishes in a metaphysical idolatry which is unaware of itself. At the end of the book comes the theme of the 'Salman of the microcosm'. The fructification of Imamology in mystical experience, fully realized in the Sufi Ismailism derived from Alamut, has already begun.

Reference has just been made to the 'science of letters' which was to be so important for Jabir ibn Hayyan (see below, IV, 2), and even for Avicenna (see below, V, 4). It was borrowed from the Shiites by the Sunni mystics, and was extensively developed by Ibn al-'Arabi and his school. We know that for Mark the Gnostic, the body of *Aletheia*, Truth, was made up of the letters of the alphabet. For Mughirah ibn Sa'id al-'ljli—possibly the most ancient of Shiite gnostics {d. 119/737)—letters are the elements out of which the very 'body' of God is composed. Hence the significance of his speculations on the supreme Name of God: for example, seventeen people will rise again at the coming of the Imam-Mahdi, and each of them will be allotted one of the seventeen letters which make up the supreme Name. A systematic comparison of this with the Jewish Cabbalah has not yet been attempted.

3. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to follow the transition between these texts which express what could be termed *proto-Ismailism,* and the triumphal period in which the coming of the Fatimid dynasty to Cairo in 296/909, with 'Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi, was seen as the realization on earth of the Ismaili hope for the kingdom of God. Between the death of the Imam Muhammad, son of the Imam Isma'il, and the founder of the Fatimid dynasty, there is the obscure period of the three hidden Imams *(mastur*—not to be confused with the idea *of the ghaybah* of the twelfth Imam in Twelver Imamism). Let us merely observe that in Ismaili tradition, the second of these hidden Imams, Imam Ahmad, great-grandson of the Imam Isma'il, is considered to have sponsored the writing of the Encyclopaedia of the I*khwan al-Safa'*, and to have been the author of *al-Risalat al-Jami'ah,* the synthesis which recapitulates the contents of the Encyclopaedia from the point of view of Ismaili esotericism (see below, IV, 3). In addition, we can mention a Yemeni author, Ja'far ibn Mansur al-Yaman. This brings us to the middle of the fourth/tenth century.

At the end of this obscure period, we may remark the appearance of great systematic works, composed with perfect technique and using a precise philosophical vocabulary, even though we are unable to determine the context in which they were produced. Even more explicitly than in the case of the Twelver Shiites, the greatest names among these masters of Ismaili thought, apart from Qadi al-Nu'man (d. 363/974), all belong to Iranians: **Abu** Hatim al-Razi (d. 322/933), whose famous controversies with his compatriot, the philosopher-doctor Rhazes, are discussed later (see below, IV, 4); Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani (fourth/tenth century), a profound thinker and the author of about twenty works written in a concise and difficult language; Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Nisaburi (fifth/eleventh century); Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani (d. ca. 408/1017), a prolific and extraordinarily profound writer; as a *da 'I* of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim, he was also the author of several treatises in which he argues against the Druze, the' separated brethren' of Ismailis; Mu'ayyad fi al-Din al-Shirazi (d. 470/1077), equally prolific in both Arabic and Persian, and holder of the high rank of *bab* (Threshold) in the esoteric hierarchy; the famous Nasir-i Khusraw (d. between 465/1072 and 470/1077), all of whose many works are written in Persian.

4. As we will see below (B, II, 1), the decision taken by the eighth Fatimid caliph, al-Mustansir bi-Allah, with regard to his successor, split the Ismaili community, after his death in 487/1094, into two branches. On the one hand, there was the branch of the so-called 'Oriental' Ismailis, the Ismailis of Persia, whose main centre was the 'command post' of Alamut in the mountains to the south-west of the Caspian Sea. In India today they are called Khojas, and they acknowledge the Aga Khan as their head. On the other hand, there was the branch of the so-called 'Occidental' Ismailis, the Ismailis of Egypt and Yemen, who acknowledged the Imamate of al-Musta'li, second son of al-Mustansir, and continued the ancient Fatimid tradition. For them, the last Fatimid Imam was Abu al-Qasim al-Tayyib, son of the tenth Fatimid caliph al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah (d. 524/1130), and twenty-first Imam in the Imamic line which started with 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (thus giving us three *heptads).* But he disappeared while still a child, and as a matter of fact the Ismailis of this branch, known in India as Bohras, affirm, like the Twelver Shiites, the necessity of the Imam's occultation, with all its metaphysical implications. They owe obedience to a da'i or high priest, who is simply the representative of the invisible Imam.

The fate of the literature of the Ismailism of Alamut will be discussed later. The literature of the 'occidental' Ismailis, who remained faithful to the ancient Fatimid tradition, is represented by a number of monumental works, which appeared particularly in Yemen towards the end of **the** sixteenth century, when the residence of the great *da'i* was

moved to India. Needless to say, this Yemeni philosophy has been completely absent up till now from our histories of philosophy, for the good reason that it has long been kept under the seal of the strictest secrecy. (We may recall that Yemen belongs officially to the Zaydi branch of Shiism, which we cannot discuss here.) Some of these Yemeni Ismailis were prolific authors: Sayyid-na Ibrahim ibn al-Hamidi, second *da'i* (died at San'a' in 557/1162); Sayyid-na Hatim ibn Ibrahim, third *da'i{d.* 596/1199); Sayyid-na 'Ali ibn Muhammad, fifth *da'i* (d. 612/1215), author of twenty great works, outstanding among which is his monumental response to al-Ghazali's attacks (see below, V, 7); Sayyid-na Husayn ibn 'Ali, eighth *da'i(d.* 667/1268), hitherto the only one among them to have had a treatise translated (into French; see bibliography). This whole Yemeni period culminates in the work of Sayyid-na Idris 'Imad al-Din, nineteenth *da'i* of Yemen (d. 872/1468). Even though the last three authors specified are posterior to the date we assigned as the limit of the first part of this study, reference to them is unavoidable.

5. The precise significance of philosophy in Ismailism must be sought in the Ismaili exegesis, developed in the commentary of a *qasidah* by Abu al-Haytham al-Jurjani, of the following *hadith* of the Prophet: 'Between my tomb and the pulpit where I preach, there is a garden from among the gardens of Paradise.' Needless to say, this saying is not to be understood in a literal, exoteric sense *(zahir).* The pulpit for preaching is precisely this literal appearance, that is to say, positive religion with all its imperatives and dogmas. The tomb is philosophy *(falsafah),* for in this tomb the exoteric aspect of positive religion and its dogmas must undergo the decomposition and dissolution of death. The garden of paradise which stretches between the pulpit and the tomb is the garden of gnostic truth, the field of Resurrection where the initiate rises again to an incorruptible life. Such a concept makes philosophy into a necessary *initiatory* stage, and this is without doubt unique in Islam: it is the whole spirit of Shiite gnosis, and the whole point of the *da 'wah,* the 'Ismaili Convocation' (literally, the Ismaili *kerygma).*

We are dealing here not with a more or less precarious balance between philosophy and theology, not with the 'double truth' of the Averroists, still less with the idea of philosophy as *ancilla theologiae.* The religion which is *theosophia,* True Religion *(din-i haqq),* is reborn

from the intermediate, from what lies between the dogma and the tomb where dogmatic belief must die and be metamorphosed. *Ta'wil* is the exegesis which transcends all known facts and redirects them to their origin. Philosophy culminates in gnosis, for it leads to spiritual birth *(wiladah ruhaniyah).* We can perceive the themes which are common to Twelver Imamism and Ismailism, as well as the themes on which Ismailism, particularly that of Alamut, was to differ: the relationship between *shari'ah* and *haqiqah,* between prophecy and the Imamate. They are not, however, themes which derive from Greek philosophy.

We cannot enter here into details—for example, the differences between the *pentadic* schema of Nasir-i Khusraw's cosmology, and the structure of the pleroma according to Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani; or the *decadic* system described by the latter, which accords with those of al-Farabi and Avicenna. We may observe, however, particularly in the case of al-Farabi (d. 339/950), a concern with prophetic philosophy (see below, V, 2), while for their part certain great Ismaili works of capital importance (by Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani and Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani) were written prior to Avicenna (d. 429/1037). To undertake a comparative study of the features of Islamic thought, which is far more diverse and rich than has been hitherto supposed in the West, and to isolate the particular context of a philosophy which does not identify itself with the Greek contribution, is a task for the future. Here, we can but make a brief survey of some of the themes, taking Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani, Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, and the Yemeni writers as our principal guides.

I. Fatimid Ismailism

1. *The dialectic of the Tawhid*

1. If we are to understand what it is that makes the Ismaili doctrine, •• the form *par excellence* of Islamic gnosis, so profoundly original, and what it is that differentiates it from the Hellenizing philosophers, We must consider the intuition on which it is based. In order to preserve the divine Abyss from being assimilated to any of its derivatives, the ancient Gnostics had recourse to purely negative terms in describing it: Unknowable, Unnameable, Ineffable, Abyss. These expressions have their equivalents in Ismaili terminology: the Principle or Originator *(mubdi'),* the Mystery of Mysteries *{al-ghayb al-ghuyub),* 'he who

transcends the boldness of thought'. It is impossible to attribute to him names, attributes, qualifications, being or non-being. The Principle is Super-being; he is not, but *causes to be,* is the *cause of being.* In this sense, Ismailism truly pursued a 'primal philosophy'. Everything, in fact, that the Avicennan philosophers say about the Necessary Being, the First Being *{al-haqq al-awwal),* must be displaced in order to be true: their metaphysics starts with the affirmation of being, and thus starts but with *caused-being.* Ismaili metaphysics ascends to the level of the *cause of being:* prior to being, there is the putting of being into the imperative, the originating *KN (Esto*!). Beyond even the One, there is the Unific *(muwahhid),* he who monadizes all monads. The *tawhid* thus assumes the aspect of a monadology: it isolates this Unifying Principle from all the *ones that* is unifies, and at the same time it affirms this Principle in and through them.

2. The *tawhid*—the affirmation of the Unique—must therefore avoid the dual trap of *ta'til* (agnosticism) and of *tashbih* (the assimilation of that which is Manifested to its Manifestation). Hence we have the dialectic of double negativity: the Principle is non-being and *not* non-being, not in time and *not* not in time, and so on. Each negation is true only on condition of being itself denied. The truth lies in the simultaneity of this double negation, whose complement is the dual action of the *tanzih* (the subduction of the Names and operations from the supreme divinity in order to transfer them to the *hudud,* the celestial and terrestrial stages of his Manifestation), and the *tajrid (the* isolation and re-projection of the divinity beyond his Manifestations). In this way, the 'theophanic function' is initiated and defined. A twelfth-century Yemeni author defined the *tawhid us* 'consisting in knowledge of the celestial and the terrestrial *hudud* (plural of *hadd,* limit or degree), and in the recognition that each of them is unique in its rank and degree, without having another associated with it'.

Described in these terms, the esoteric *tawhid* appears some way removed from the usual monotheism of the theologians. In order to understand it, full weight must be given to the idea of *hadd,* meaning limit or degree. The idea is distinctive in that it confirms the bond between the 'monadological' conception of the *tawhid and* the fundamental hierarchism of Ismaili ontology, thus establishing a close correlation between the action of the *tawhid*—recognition of the Unique—and the *tawahhud*—the process that constitutes a unity, the

monadization of a monad. In other words, the *shirk* which disintegrates the divinity by pluralizing it is *eo ipso* the disintegration of the human monad, which is only able to make itself into a true unity through knowing the *hadd* of which it is the *mahdud*—through knowing, that is, the limit which determines its rank in the scale of being. The question confronting us, then, is the following: at what limit or *hadd* sequent to Super-Being does the revelation of being unfold? In other words: how is the first *hadd,* the First Being, made? What is the *limit at* which the divinity rises from its abyss of absolute unknowability, the limit at which it is revealed as a Person, with whom a personal relationship of knowledge and love is possible? And, following on the primordial divine Epiphany, how do all the *hudud* unfold? (The word *hudud* is often translated as 'grades' or 'dignitaries' of the esoteric hierarchies, whether celestial or terrestrial. While this is not inaccurate, it veils the metaphysical aspect of the word.) To ask these questions is to enquire into the eternal birth of the Pleroma.

3. The earlier authors—the Iranians whom we mentioned earlier—envisaged it in terms of the procession of being from the First Intelligence. The Yemeni writers say that all the Intelligences—the archangelic 'Forms of light' in the Pleroma—were established simultaneously and equally, but that this was as yet no more than 'first perfection'. The 'second perfection', which was to have established them definitively in being, was dependent on their attaining the *tawhid,* for it is on this *tawhid that* the integration of each being *(tawahhud)* depends. The differentiation, structure and hierarchization of being is achieved through the *tawhid.* It should be observed at once that the term *ibda',* signifying the immediate creative origination (our authors refuse to say either 'as a result of something' or *ex nihilo),* is reserved for the eternal act which puts the being of the celestial Pleroma into the *imperative* mode. The Pleroma is designated *'alam al-ibda', 'alam AL-amr.* the world of being in the imperative mode, *Esto.* It contrasts with the *'alam al-khalq,* which is the creatural world, the object of creation. Both in the older schema and in that of the Yemenis, the procession of being or *Emanation (inbi'ath)* originates solely in the First Intelligence, the integral or universal Intelligence *(al- 'aql al-kull).*

This Intelligence is itself Being in the imperative mode. As the first Originated *(al-mubda' al-awwal),* it is the act itself of eternal Origination *{ibda'),* the creative divine Word *(kalam Allah);* for this imperative

Word, in effectuating the epiphany of the first Intelligence as the first Being, is one with the Intelligence Manifested. The Yemeni writers say that the first Intelligence was the first to accomplish the *tawhid,* and that it summoned thereto the other Forms of light. Hence the name, *sabiq,* by which the Intelligence is known—as name signifying 'he who goes before, who precedes'. The ancient writers did in fact apply themselves to the task of studying the exemplary case of this initial *tawhid as* being that of a cosmic liturgy, typified in the two moments of the profession of the Islamic faith: *la ilaha illa Allah.* For in this *tawhid* the *delimitation* of the being of the First Intelligence is accomplished—a delimitation which makes it the first *hadd,* the essential Epiphany. The act of intellection whereby the First Intelligence recognizes its Principle is also the only divine Ipseity accessible to our apprehension: the *Deus determinatus* or *Deus revelatus.*

4. In its two phases, the *tawhid* constitutes the secret of being of the first Intelligence. *La ilaha:* there is no God, absolute negation. The divine *Absconditum* disallows the possibility of apprehending or affirming any divinity of which something could be predicated. It is succeeded *(cf.* the dialectic described above) by an exceptive proposition *(illa = nisi),* an absolute and particular affirmation which does not derive from any logical premiss. Between the two moments of the profession runs the ridgeway—between the two abysses of *ta'til* and *tashbih.* For insofar as, and because, the first Intelligence or first Being recognizes that divinity in its essence is beyond it, and because it denies itself this divinity, it is actually invested with the supreme Name of divinity, and is the only Ipseity of the Principle that it is possible for us to apprehend. The entire mystery of the *Deus revelatus* consists in this. The affirmative *ilia Allah* is the challenge which the first Intelligence, through its adoration, levels at its own powerlessness; it is the positive 'dimension' of its being, and as such it summons into being the second Intelligence, the universal Soul, its first Emamant *(al-munba'ith al-awwal),* known as the *tailor* 'he who follows'. In Yemeni terms, the *tawhid of* the first Intelligence makes possible the *tawhid of* the second Intelligence, in the sense that the latter, of which the first Intelligence is the 'limit' *(hadd),* the 'horizon', the *sabiq,* refers the words *ilia Allah* back to the first Intelligence. But from the start, the first Intelligence assigned divinity, not to itself, but back to its Principle, beyond itself. In the same way, therefore, going from stage

to stage *{hadd to hadd),* the *tawhid is* possible without *tashbih* or *ta'til,* whereas the orthodox literalists fall into the very trap of metaphysical idolatry which they claimed to avoid.

To avoid this metaphysical idolatry it has to be recognized that the only ipseity of the Principle which we can attain is the knowledge possessed by the first Intelligence, the archangel Logos, of the Principle which establishes it—a knowledge it possesses through the very act of its being. This knowledge, however, is itself an Unknowingness: the Intelligence knows that it cannot attain to the essential ground of the Principle. Nevertheless, apart from that, there is no sense in talking of the existence or absence of a divine reality, for the Principle pertains neither to the being of which one can say what it is, nor to the non-being of which one can declare negatively what it is not. This is why for all Ismaili gnosis the first Intelligence is the *Deus revelatus,* both the Veil and the support of the supreme Name *Al-Lah.* All the Quranic verses in which this name is named refer to the first Intelligence. But it must be understood in the sense specified by the etymology of the name *Al-Lah,* as professed by Ismaili thinkers and certain Arabic grammarians. (We are not concerned here to accommodate grammarians and linguists, but to ascertain what is really present to the Ismaili consciousness.) They derive the word from the root *wlh,* which denotes the idea of being stricken with stupor and sadness (like the traveller in the desert): *ilah = wilah.* Similarly, the Arabic script makes it possible to read, ideographically, in the word *ulhaniyah*—divinity—the word *al-hanniyah:* the state of him who sighs or desires. There is an affective sense here of the divine mystery: the idea that the divine ipseity 'essencifies' itself only in negativity, in the stupor or sadness of the first Archangel or first Intelligence as he experiences his powerlessness to reach the self-hood of this divinity, whose Name devolves upon him even while he disclaims such divinity for himself. In the same way he becomes the object of desire or nostalgia for all those who proceed from the first Intelligence. The same paradox is repeated at all the levels *(hudud)* of the hierarchies of Heaven and Earth. Whatever may be the limit *(hadd)* attained, there is always another limit beyond. The metaphysical hierarchism of Ismaili gnosis is rooted in this sense of distances—a sense which, as we shall see, involves the entire *da 'wah* in a continuous ascending motion.

5. The relationship initially determined is, then, that between the first

hadd and the first *mahdud*, that is to say, between the first Intelligence and the second Intelligence, which proceeds from the first and of which the first is the 'limit' or horizon. This is the dyad of *sabiq* and *tali*, Pen and Tablet *(lawhah)*, whose earthly homologues are the Prophet and his *wasi* or heir, the first Imam of a period (see below, B, I, 3). This dyadic structure is repeated at all levels of both the celestial and the terrestrial hierarchy, the one corresponding with the other, and gives an Ismaili significance to the phrase, 'He who knows himself knows his Lord'. However, the procession of the third Intelligence initiates a drama in which the origin of evil is ascribed to a 'past' long preceding the existence of earthly man.

2. *The drama in Heaven and the birth of Time*

1. If the Ismaili community calls itself the *da 'wah*, the 'Convocation' to the esoteric *tawhid*, it is because this Convocation, or 'Proclamation' *{keiygma)* began 'in Heaven' with the summons addressed by the First Intelligence, prior to time, to all the Forms of light in the archangelic Pleroma. This *da'wah* 'in Heaven' is the eternal Convocation of which the 'Ismaili Convocation' is merely the terrestrial form, the form appropriate to the Muhammadan period of the present cycle of prophecy. On earth—that is to say in the phenomenal world—its existence began with the initial Adam, well before the Adam of our own cycle. Whereas the Second Intelligence—the First Emanant—obeyed this summons, the Third Intelligence, which proceeded from the dyad of the first two, opposed it with negation and refusal. This Third Intelligence was the *Adam ruhani*, the celestial spiritual Adam, angel-archetype of humanity, in whose person the Ismaili metaphysical imagination represents, in symbolic form, the hierohistory of humanity's origin.

The spiritual Adam, then, remains motionless in a state of amazed bedazzlement before himself. He refuses the 'limit' *(hadd)* preceding him, the Second Intelligence, because he does not see that even if this *hadd* 'limits' his horizon it also points towards the beyond. He believes that he can attain the inaccessible Principle without this intermediary 'limit' because, being ignorant of the mystery of the *Deus revelatus* in the First Intelligence, he thinks that to do otherwise would be to identify this limit with the absolute deity, the *mubdi'*. In order to escape this idolatry, he exalts himself into the absolute, thus succumbing to

the worst metaphysical idolatry of all. When, finally, he rouses himself from this stupor, rather in the manner of an archangel Michael winning the victory over himself, he hurls away from him the demonic shadow of Iblis (Satan, Ahriman) into the lower world, where it reappears with every cycle of occultation. But he realizes that he has been' overtaken', 'delayed' *(takhalluf)*, that he has fallen behind himself: from being the Third Intelligence he has become the Tenth. This interval is the measure of the *time* of his stupor, a time which he must redeem. It corresponds to the emanation of *seven* other Intelligences who are called the 'Seven Cherubim' or the 'Seven divine Words', and who assist the Angel-Adam to come to himself. The *Seven* denote the ideal distance of his fall. The *time* is his delay over himself—it is literally true, in this context, to say that time is 'eternity delayed'. This is why *seven* periods govern the rhythm of the prophetic cycle, and *seven* Imams govern the rhythm of each period of this cycle. Herein lie the metaphysical roots of Sevener, or Ismaili, Shiism. The number seven represents the delay of eternity in the Pleroma, a delay which the Third Angel, now become the Tenth, must reclaim for his followers, and with their help.

This 'delay' introduces into a being of light a dimension which is alien to it and which expresses itself in the form of an 'opaqueness'. It is interesting to recall that in the Zarvanist theosophy of ancient Iran, Tenebrosity {Ahriman) originated in a *doubt* which arose in the thought of Zarvan, the supreme divinity. However, for the Zarvanists and Gayomarthians described in the sixth/twelfth century by al-Shahra-Ntani, Zarvan was no longer the supreme divinity but an angel of the Pleroma. It could be said that the spiritual Adam, the Third Angel of the Ismaili cosmogony, is the homologue of the Angel Zarvan in this lute neo-Zarvanism.

2. Each archangelic Intelligence in the Pleroma itself contains a pleroma of innumerable Forms of light. All the Forms who composed the pleroma of the celestial Adam were immobilized with him in the same delay. In his turn, he communicated to them the *da'wah*, the eternal Summons. Most of them, however, in varying degrees of obstinacy and rage, rejected him and even denied him the right to make such an appeal. This denial darkened the essential ground of their being, which had previously been purely incandescent. The Angel-Adam realized that if they were to remain in the pure spiritual world, they

would never free themselves of their Tenebrosity. This is the reason why he made himself the *demiurge* of the physical cosmos, as the instrument through which the Forms who had once been of Light would find their salvation.

This symbolical history is clearly reminiscent of Manichaeism. Furthermore, in the Ismaili schema, the Third Intelligence who becomes the Tenth takes on the same position and role as the 'active Intelligence' in the writings of the Avicennan philosophers and the *ishraqiyun* {see below, V, 4 and VII}. (We explained above why this Intelligence is identified with the Holy Spirit, with Gabriel as the angel of Knowledge and Revelation.) There is a difference in that, for Ismaili theosophy, this Intelligence does not simply come tenth in the normal course of Emanation: it is seen as the central figure in a 'drama in Heaven' which precedes and explains our present terrestrial humanity.

All the members of his pleroma were seized with panic terror when they saw the Tenebrosity invade their being. The triple movement which they executed in a vain attempt to tear themselves away from it resulted in the three dimensions of cosmic space. The densest mass consolidated itself at the centre, while cosmic space exploded into several regions: those of the celestial Spheres and those of the Elements. Each of the planets in turn ruled for the space of a millennium over a world in gestation, up till the beginning of the seventh millennium, the cycle of the Moon. At this point, like a plant growing out of the Earth, appeared the first human being surrounded by his companions.

3. *Cyclical Time: Hierohistory and Hierarchies*

1. This earthly *Anthropos* is designated as the *integral primordial Adam (Adam al-awwal al-kulli),* the *pananthropos.* He must therefore be distinguished both from his celestial archetype, the spiritual Adam, the Third Intelligence who became the Tenth, and from the partial *{juz'i)* Adam who inaugurated our present cycle. He is described as the 'physical personification of the primordial Pleroma'. Needless to say, he has no connection with the primitive man of our philosophizing palaeontologies. He made his appearance in Ceylon *(Sarandib),* because Ceylon then possessed the most perfect temperate climate; and with him appeared twenty- seven companions. 'As the red hyacinth stands out among the other stones', so he stood out among these twenty-seven companions, just as they stood out from the rest of

humanity which arose at the same time as them. Together with him, these twenty-seven companions are the visible typification, in a form possessing 'physical mass', of the primordial archangelic Pleroma, for they are the faithful humanity of the pleroma of the Tenth Angel, those who responded to his *da'wah.* Their fidelity 'in Heaven' is expressed in their earthly condition by a physical and spiritual superiority over all the human beings of other climes *(jazirah),* who came into existence with them at the conclusion of the same anthropogonic process.

This first earthly Adam is simultaneously the epiphanic form *(mazhar)* and the Veil of the celestial Adam. He is the celestial Adam's first thought and the limit of his knowledge, the substance of his action and the ray which concentrates the brilliance of his light. Like the Adam of Judaeo-Christian prophetology, he is αναμάρτητος (whose exact equivalent is the Arabic term *ma 'sum),* immune from all impurity and sin—a privilege that he transmitted from cycle to cycle to all the holy Imams. His own cycle was one of epiphany *(dawr al-kashf),* an era of felicity in which the human condition, including even its physical characteristics, was still that of a paradisical humanity. Human beings perceived the spiritual realities *(haqa'iq)* directly, not through the veil of symbol. The first Adam founded the 'Noble Convocation' *(al-da'wah al-sharifah)* in this world; he it was who established the hierarchy of the hierocosmos (*'alam al-din),* which symbolizes both with that of the Pleroma and with that of the macrocosm. He sent out *twelve* of his twenty-seven companions, twelve *da'is,* into the twelve *jazirahs* of the Earth, and he appointed twelve *hujjahs,* the 61ite among his companions, in his presence. In short, he was the founder of the permanent esoteric hierarchy, uninterrupted from cycle to cycle, and from period to period in each cycle, up to and since Islam.

After having invested his successor, the first Adam was transferred to the Pleroma. Here he succeeded the Tenth Angel—the celestial Adam—who himself rose, together with the entire hierarchy of Intelligences, to a level higher than the one he had previously occupied. This ascending movement will not cease until the Third Angel-Intelligence, whose aberrance immobilized him and thus demoted him to the rank of Tenth Intelligence, has regained the sphere of the Second Emanant or Second Intelligence. The same pattern applied to each of the Imams who succeeded the first Adam in the first epiphanic cycle. This cycle of epiphany was followed by one of occultation *(dawr*

al-satr), which was followed by a new cycle of epiphany and so on, the cycles alternating with each other in rotatory succession. This will continue until the ultimate Resurrection of Resurrections *(qiyamat al-qiyamat,* which will be the consummation of our *Aion* and will restore humanity and its Angel to their initial state. In some of their sayings, the holy Imams go as far as calculating the Great Cycle {*al- dawr al-a'zam)* at 360,000 times 360,000 years.

2. Understandably, the only case about which our Ismaili theosophers are able to speak at length is the transition leading to our present cycle of occultation from the epiphanic cycle which precedes it. The Ismaili *ta'wil* was applied with extraordinary depth to the Quranic and Biblical history of Adam—an account which is concerned not with an absolute beginning, but with things occurring in the wake of terrible disasters. During the three final millennia of the previous epiphanic cycle, serious disturbances forced high-ranking dignitaries to re-institute the 'discipline of the arcane'. The exalted spiritual sciences were silenced, and humanity became unworthy of the revelation of the mysteries. A religious *Law, shari'ah,* had to be established, from which the *ta'wil* would liberate only those whom it would lead to resurrection through rebirth, in the night of symbols. This is the fall known as the 'departure from Paradise'. Henceforth, there is only the 'potential paradise'—that is to say, the esoteric fellowship, the Ismaili *da'wah.*

The Quranic history of Adam is seen as that of the investiture of the young Imam Adam by his father Hunayd, the last Imam of the preceding epiphanic cycle. All the 'terrestrial Angels'—the members of the *da 'wah*—acknowledged him except Iblis-Satan and his followers. Iblis was a dignitary of the previous cycle, in whose person there now reappeared the form of the Tenebrosity originally precipitated on the Earth by the celestial Adam. Iblis' intention was to move Adam, to appeal to his generosity and thus induce him to reveal to men that 'knowledge of the resurrection' which they had both possessed in the previous cycle. Whereupon Adam, carried away by a mad impulse, betrayed it, giving up to the incomprehension of all men that which could be revealed only by the last Imam of our cycle, the Imam of the Resurrection *(qa'im al-qiyamah).*

3. The structure of the cycle of occultation inaugurated by our own Adam may be understood with reference to the original structure

established on earth by the first Adam, the first Imam on earth, in correspondence with that of the visible and of the invisible Heavens. As we have shown, the 'grades' of the celestial and the terrestrial hierarchies are designated by the term hadd (limit). The *hadd* defines the horizon of consciousness of each level, the mode of knowledge proper to its mode of being. Thus, each lower limit is 'delimited' *(mahdud)* by the *hadd* immediately superior to it. Essential for the understanding of the *tawhid,* this structure determines the entire course of anthropology.

Even though the full significance of the esoteric hierarchy throughout the periods of Ismailism still presents problems, its structure has been fully delineated by Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani (d. *ca.* 408/1017). There is the celestial hierarchy (the *hudud* above), and there is the terrestrial hierarchy (the *hudud* below), which symbolize with each other. Altogether, each of these hierarchies forms *ten grades,* linked together as a *triad* (the higher levels) and a *heptad.* (1) On earth there is the *natiq,* that is to say, the prophet who *annunciates* a *shari'ah,* a divine Law communicated to him by the Angel *(cf.* above, A, 5). This is the letter of the text uttered in exoteric form *(zahir),* as the code of positive religion. The *natiq* is the earthly homologue of the First Intelligence, the Intelligence who inaugurated the *da'wah* 'in Heaven'. (2) There is the *wasi,* the Imam who is the prophet's direct spiritual heir, the foundation *(asas)* of the Imamate and the first Imam of a period. As the depository of the secret of prophetic revelation, his proper function is the *ta'wil,* the esoteric exegesis which 'redirects' the exoteric aspect to the hidden meaning, to its archetype *(asl).* He is the homologue of the Second Intelligence, the First Emanant or universal Soul. (The dyad of *nabi-wasi,* First and Second Intelligences, corresponds here to the two aspects of the 'eternal Muhammadan Reality' in Twelver Shiism; see above, A, 3.) (3) There is the Imam who succeeds of *asas,* and who throughout the cycle maintains the equilibrium of esoteric and exoteric, whose relatedness is indispensable. He is the homologue of the Third Intelligence, the spiritual Adam. This is why each period will have a *heptad,* or several heptads, of Imams, typifying the interval of 'delay', the *time* that the celestial Adam must redeem with the help of his followers in order to regain his rank. With regard to the *seven* other grades, each is, respectively, the homologue of one of the other Forms of light or Intelligences in the Pleroma: the *bab* or 'threshold'

of the Imam; the *hujjah,* the Proof or Guarantee (which assumes an altogether special significance in the Ismailism of Alamut); three degrees of *da'i* or preacher (literally 'convoker'); and two lower grades: the senior master {*al-ma 'dhun al-mutlaq),* who may accept the commitment of the new initiate, and the junior master *(al-ma 'dhun al-mahsur)* whose task is to attract neophytes.

Such is the vertical structure of the esoteric hierarchy which, according to our authors, endures from cycle to cycle. The form of hierocosmos in space has its temporal isomorph in the form of hierohistory. Each period of a cycle of prophecy—that is to say, a cycle of occultation—is inaugurated by a *natiq,* a *wasi,* who are succeeded by one or more heptads of Imams. It is terminated by a last Imam, the *qa'im* or Imam of the Resurrection, who puts an end to the preceding period and who raises up *(muqim)* the new prophet. The seven periods as a whole make up the totality of the prophetic cycle, an idea which is common to all Shiite prophetology. These periods appertain to seven great prophets: Adam, whose Imam was Seth; Noah, whose Imam was Shem; Abraham, whose Imam was Ishmael; Moses, whose Imam was Aaron; Jesus, whose Imam was Sham'un (Simon); Muhammad, whose Imam was 'Ali. The seventh *natiq is* the Imam of the Resurrection (who corresponds to the twelfth Imam of the Imami Shiites). He does not bring a new *shari'ah;* he reveals the hidden meaning of the Revelations, with all the tumults and upheavals that this involves, and prepares the way for the future Cycle of epiphany.

4. *Imamology and eschatology*

1. We are in a better position to understand the meaning of Imamology, and with it the eschatological *ethos* dominating all Shiite consciousness, when we remember that, as we observed above, Ismaili Imamology, like Shiite Imamology in general, was confronted with problems similar to those which confronted Christianity during the first centuries of our era, and that it always tended to find solutions of a type characteristic of the Gnostics—precisely the sort of solutions, in fact, which were rejected by official Christology.

In speaking of the *nasut* or humanity of the Imam, Ismaili authors are concerned to intimate that the Imam's body is not a body of flesh, constituted like that of other human beings. The Imam's body results from a whole cosmic alchemization of the 'etheric bodies' *(al-nafs*

al-rihiyah, the 'effluvious soul') of faithful initiates. These 'etheric' particles rise from Heaven to Heaven and then re-descend, purified, invisible to the eye's perception, by means of lunar rays, settling like a heavenly dew on the surface of pure water or of certain fruits. The water and the fruit are consumed by the current Imam and his wife, and the heavenly dew becomes the germ of the subtle body of the new Imam. A simple envelope or sheath *(ghilaf),* it is designated *jism kafuri,* a body which possesses the subtlety and whiteness of camphor; and this is the body which constitutes the humanity *{nasut)* of the Imam. If it is possible to speak in this context of 'Docetism', we do so not because we are dealing in any sense with a 'phantom', but because we are concerned with the attempt to imagine and conceive, as though in a Gnostic form of Christology, a *caro spirtualis.* For this reason, the union of *nasut* (humanity) and *lahut* (divinity) in the person of the Imams never culminates in the idea of a 'hypostatic union of two natures', with all the philosophical, historical and social consequences that such a concept entails.

2. In order to understand what Ismaili gnosis means by the divinity *(lahut)* of the Imam, we must start with what it characterizes as the 'spiritual birth' *(al-wilada al-ruhanlyah).* Here we may discern unmistakable Manichaean overtones. The Yemeni writer already quoted has the following to say: 'When the new initiate *(mustajib)* expresses his assent between the hands of one of the dignitaries *(hudud),* at the moment when he repeats the formula which commits him, and if his intentions are true and pure, behold, a point of light is joined to his soul and remains beside it without forming part of it.' His thought and actions will determine whether this nascent point of light grows into a Form of light. If it does, then at the time of his *exitus* the faithful initiate's Form of light is drawn by the 'magnetism of the Pillar of light' towards the Form of light of the Companion who precedes him in mystical rank. (There is as it were a pact of mystical chivalry which **makes** the initiates responsible for each other even in the beyond.) **Together** they rise towards the hadd which is superior to both of them. In this way, all assume their stations and together constitute, with the *hudud,* the 'Temple of Light' *(al-haykal al-nurani),* which, while possessing the human form, is a purely spiritual Temple. This *Temple of Light is* the Imamate, and as such is the *lahut* or *divinity of the* Imam.

3. As soon as he is 'invested' *(nass),* the young Imam becomes the

support of the Temple of Light. His Imamate or 'divinity' is the *corpus mysticum* composed of all the Forms of light of his disciples. As in the case of the first Adam, each of the Imams who succeed each other in each of the periods of the cycle has his own 'sacrosanct Temple of Light' *(haykal nurani qudsani)*, which is formed in the same manner. All the Imams together form the 'Sublime Temple of Light' *{al-haykal al-nurani al-a'zam)*, which is as it were the dome of the Temple of Light. When an Imam departs from this world, his Temple of Light rises with him into the precinct of the Tenth Angel (the spiritual Adam or celestial Anthropos); and all of them, gathered together in this precinct, await the coming of *qa'im*, the Imam-resurrector who brings the cycle to a close, to rise with him at his accession as the successor of the Tenth Angel.

At each Great Resurrection *(qiyamat al-qiyamat)* which ends a cycle of occultation or of epiphany, the last Imam or *qa'im*, drawing with him the entire mystical Temple of the *hudud*, rises to the Pleroma where he succeeds the Tenth Angel, the spiritual Adam, as the demiurge of the natural world. The Tenth Angel himself then rises one rank in the Pleroma, drawing the whole Pleroma with him in this ascent. In this way, each Great Resurrection—each completed cycle—enables the Angel of humanity and all his followers to approach his and their original rank. This is how the succession of cycles and millennia redeems *time*, that 'eternity delayed' by the Angel's momentary plunge into darkness, and how the way is prepared for the d6nouement of the 'drama in Heaven'. Cosmogony and soteriology are two aspects of the same process leading up to this denouement. The *meaning* and aim of the creation of the cosmos is to make it an instrument whereby the celestial Adam may regain his lost rank. He regains it from cycle to cycle with the help of all those who, previously to their earthly state, obeyed his 'summons' in the Pleroma, or who respond in this life to the convocation *(da'wah)* of the prophets and the Imams.

4. As for the tenebrous form of the malefic denegators, it rises at the time of their *exitus* to the region known in astronomy as 'the head and tail of the Dragon' (the point at which the Moon's orbit intersects with that of the Sun). This is the region of tenebrosity, swirling with the *massa perditionis* of all the demons of humanity, the mass of evil thoughts and plots conspiring to bring about the catastrophes which shake the world of men.

For this reason, earthly events can be explained only by their esoteric reality, that is to say, with reference to the 'drama in Heaven' whose denouement they in fact prepare. In this 'philosophy of history' is expressed the majestic vision of a prophetic philosophy characteristic of Ismaili thought. In fact, the Ismaili version of Shiism has features which are common to all Shiism: the eschatological ethic, the dominating figure of the *qa'im* who, as we saw, is expressly identified with the Paraclete proclaimed in the Gospel of John. This is why Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani (fourth/tenth century) perceived, in the four arms of the Christian Cross and in the four words which make up the Attestation of the Islamic faith *(the tawhid)*, a symbol of one and the same secret: the coming of the Imam at the end of the Night of Destiny *(laylat al-qadr*, Surah 7); for this is none other than the Night of humanity in this cycle of occultation.

II. The reformed Ismailism of Alamut

I. Periods and sources

1. There is no need here to speak at any length of the 'horror story' which, in the absence of authentic texts, eclipsed for so long the name of Ismailism and in particular the memory of Alamut. There is no doubt that responsibility rests in the first place with the imagination of the Crusaders and of Marco Polo. But even in the nineteenth century, an Austrian orientalist and man of letters, von Hammer-Purgstall, projected onto the unfortunate Ismailis his obsession with 'secret societies', and suspected them of all the crimes which in Europe are attributed by some to the Freemasons and by others to the Jesuits. The result was the *Geschichte der Assassinen* (1818), a work which continued to be taken seriously for a long time. In his turn S. de Sacy, in his *Expose de la religion des Druzes* (1838), passionately defended his etymological explanation of the word 'Assassins' by the word *hashshashin* (those who make use of *hashish)*. All this comes from the usual zeal with which religious or philosophic minorities are accused of the worst moral depravities. What is most strange is that orientalists, like admen greedy for sensationalism, should have made themselves the accomplices down to our times of the violent anti-Ismaili propaganda, put about by the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad. After the impulse given to Ismaili studies by W. Ivanow and the Ismaili Society

of Karachi (formerly of Bombay), there is no longer any excuse for these fantasies. The following is a significant example. We saw that the Ismaili *da'wah* is designated the 'potential paradise', and the Ismaili exegesis of the *'hadith* of the tomb' {see p. 78 above) gives us to understand how entry into the *da'wah* is in fact entry into the 'potential paradise' *(jinnah,* paradise or garden). This was all that was needed for the propaganda of the opposition to imagine 'orgies' in the 'gardens of Alamut'. For the rest, it is a question of an anti-Turkish phenomenon of resistance, and of a struggle carried on by the Ismailis in tragic circumstances. But the philosophy and the spiritual doctrine of Ismailism have no connection with the 'stories of the assassins'.

2. We have already given a brief account of how al-Mustansir bi-Allah, the Fatimid caliph of Cairo, transferred the investiture of the Imamate from his elder son Nizar to his younger son al-Musta'li. On the death of the caliph in 487/1094, some people gave allegiance to al-Musta'li—they are those who continued the Fatimid *da'wah* and who are also known as the *Musta'liyan*—whereas others remained faithful to the Imam Nizar, who was assassinated, together with his son, in Cairo in 489/1096. The latter are known as *nizari,* and are the 'Oriental' Ismailis of Iran. Here again, beneath external history and the concern with personages, lie the essential themes and the spiritual issues. Ultimately, the political triumph represented by the coming of the Fatimid dynasty of Cairo seems something of a paradox. To what degree was an esoteric fellowship compatible with the official organization of a state? The same issue which had divided the Qarmatis from the beginning reappears in the promulgation of the reform of Alamut. As far as we can judge from the texts available to us, this reform was inspired by the spirit of primitive Ismailism after the Fatimid political interlude.

There was, on the other hand, the powerful personality of al-Hasan ibn al-Sabbah (d. 518/1124), knowledge of which must be acquired through the Ismaili texts themselves, since it has been so distorted elsewhere. He played a leading part in the organization of the Ismaili 'commands' in Iran. We are not attempting here to resolve the question as to whether or not some devoted disciples succeeded in leading the Imam Nizar's grandson to safety in the fortress of Alamut (in the mountains south-west of the Caspian Sea). For whatever may have occurred, one fact remains, and it is of great spiritual significance.

3. This all-important fact was the initiative taken by the Imam Hasan *'ala dhikrihi al-salam* (distinguished by having this greeting after his name), the new grand master *(khudavand)* of Alamut (b. 520/1126, grand master in 557/1162, d. 561/1166). On the 17th day of Ramadan in 559/8th August 1164, the Imam proclaimed the Great Resurrection *(qiyamat al-qiyamat)* before all the initiates assembled on the high terrace of Alamut. The protocol of the occasion has been preserved. What the proclamation implied was nothing less than the coming of a pure spiritual Islam, freed from all spirit of legalism and of all enslavement to the Law, a personal religion of the Resurrection which is spiritual birth, in that it makes possible the discovery and the living realization of the spiritual meaning of the prophetic Revelations.

The fortress of Alamut, like the other Ismaili command-posts in Iran, was destroyed by the Mongols in 654/1256. In no sense did this event mark the end of the reformed Ismailism of Alamut, which simply retreated into hiding by donning the mantle (the *khirqah)* of Sufism. Its effect on Sufism and on Iranian spirituality in general presupposes some fundamental affinities which throw new light on the problem of the meaning and even the origins of Sufism. Furthermore, the Ismailis regard a good number of Sufi masters as their own, beginning with al-Sana'i (d. *ca.* 545/1151) and 'Attar (d. *ca.* 627/1230); Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (d. 672/1273), in relation to whom Shams al-Din al-Tabrizi assumed the role of *hujjah; 'Aziz* al-Nasafi (seventh/twelfth century), Qasim al-AnWari (d. 837/1434), and so on. One hesitates at times in deciding whether a text is written by a Sufi steeped in Ismailism, or by an Ismaili steeped in Sufism. Even this is not going far enough, for the famous Persian poem by Mahmud Shabistari (d. 720/1320), the 'Rosary of Mystery' *(gulshan-i raz),* the vade-mecum of Iranian Sufism, was commentated and expanded by Ismaili teaching.

The questions thus propounded are very recent, and are a consequence of the bringing to light, thanks mainly to the labours of W. Ivanow, of what has survived of Alamuti literature, all of which is in Persian. (We know that Alamut's library was completely destroyed by the Mongols.) We should, however, add to this literature the Arabic literature of the Ismailis of Syria, who under the powerful personality of their head, Rashid al-Din Sinan (1140-92 AD), had a direct link with Alamut. (We also know that a tragic misunderstanding on the part of the Templars wrecked an agreement that had already been

concluded between these 'Templars of Islam' and the King of Jerusalem.) Of the Persian works of Alamut, mention should principally be made of the great book of the *Tasawwurat,* attributed to Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 672/1273)—an attribution which there is no good reason to contest; the fifteenth-and sixteenth-century works by Sayyid Suhrab Wali al-Badakhshani, Abu Ishaq al-Quhistani, and the prolific author Khayr-Khwah al-Hirati. All of them have preserved much older fragments, most notably the 'Four Chapters' by al-Hasan ibn al-Sabbah himself. Equally, they testify to a renaissance of Ismaili thought, concomitant to the renaissance of Shiite thought in general and possibly one of its contributing factors. Indeed, it was during the same period that Twelver Shiism {principally with Haydar Amuli and Ibn Abi Jumhur), having assimilated the work of Ibn al-'Arabi, was induced to 'rethink' its relation to Sufism and thus to Ismailism also.

4. It is extraordinary to observe how a Twelver Shiite author of the stature of Haydar Amuli {eighth/fourteenth century) realizes, with no polemical bias, the essential difference separating him from the Ismailis. He formulates this difference in terms which do no less than explain the consequences of the Great Resurrection proclaimed at Alamut. Whereas Twelver Shiite gnosis tries to preserve the simultaneity and equilibrium of *zahir* and *batin,* Ismaili gnosis, by contrast, sees all exterior appearance, all exoteric aspect *(zahir)* as having a hidden inner meaning, an esoteric reality *(batin).* This esoteric reality is superior to the exterior appearance, for the initiate's spiritual progress depends upon the degree to which he understands it, and hence the exoteric aspect is a shell which must be shattered once and for all. This is achieved by the *ta'wil,* the Ismaili exegesis which 'redirects' the factual realities of the *shari'ah* to their gnostic truth *(haqiqah),* the understanding of the true meaning of the literal revelation or *tanzil,* positive religion. If the faithful initiate acts in accordance with the spiritual meaning, the obligations imposed by the *shari'ah* are abolished for him. This accords profoundly with the meaning of the philosophy explained above in the exegesis of the *'hadith* of the tomb'.

The Guide to this spiritual meaning—he whose very person *is* this meaning, since it is the earthly manifestation of a primordial Theophany—is the Imam. Consequently, the Imam and the Imamate, which is eternal, take precedence over the prophet and the prophetic mission,

which is temporary. As we have seen, Twelver Shiism declares that the supremacy of *walayah* over *nubuwah must* be contemplated in the person of the Prophet; it does not mean that the person of the *wali* is superior to that of the nabi-Messenger. By contrast, Ismailism derives a radical conclusion from this. Since the *walayah* is superior to the prophecy of which it is the source, it follows that the person of the wali—that is to say the Imam—takes precedence over that of the Prophet, and the Imamate always has and always will take precedence over the prophetic mission. What Twelver Shiism sees as being at the end of an eschatological perspective, is realized 'in the present' by the Ismailism of Alamut, through an anticipation of eschatology which is a revolt of the Spirit against all enslavement. The philosophical, theological and sociological consequences and implications of this in relation to the rest of Islam are more than we can speak of here. Taking the recently published texts as our guide, we can do no more than indicate their essential presupposition: an anthropology on which the philosophy of the resurrection depends, and which finds expression in the concept of the Imam.

2. *The concept of the Imam*

1. Ismaili Adamology was briefly delineated above (B, 1,3). On the one hand, the partial Adam who inaugurated our cycle was the first prophet of this cycle of occultation; on the other hand, the initial Adam or *pananthropos,* the earthly image of the celestial Anthropos, in inaugurating *ab origine* the first cycle of epiphany, became the First Imam and the founder of the Imamate, the permanent religion of humanity. On this intuition is based the Ismaili insistence on the theme of the Imam as the 'man of God' *(mard-i Khuda* in Persian, *cf.* the *anthropos tou Theou* in Philo), as the Face of God, Perfect Man (*anthropos teleios).* 'Whoever in his time has failed to understand *who* the Perfect Man was, will remain a stranger. In this sense has it been said: He who has seen me, has seen God.' We have already observed that a similar echo from the Gospel of John (14:9), confirmed by others, fits excellently into the structure which gives Imamology in relation to Shiite theology a position similar to that of Christology in relation to Christian theology. One divines, along with the secret of Ismaili Imamology—thus vindicating a number of traditions going back to the holy Imam—that which constitutes the essence of this Imamology: the

exaltation of the Imam as the Perfect Man to the supreme rank and, as a corollary to this, the decisive and definitive supremacy of the *ta'wil*—of, that is to say, esoteric Islam over exoteric Islam, of the religion of the Resurrection over the religion of the Law.

This concept of the Imam is integral to the entire philosophy of mankind. Because the human Form is 'the image of the divine Form', it is *par excellence* invested with the theophanic function. It thereby assumes the function of cosmic salvation, because the return to the World beyond—the world of spiritual entities—is the transition to a state of existence in which everything takes the form of human reality, since it is the human being alone who possesses speech, the *logos.* Thus, it is through the instrumentality of Man that things rediscover the way back to the Origin. But this perfect human Form—this theophany disclosed in pre-eternity—is that of the Imam. To say that the Imam is the Man of God, Perfect Man, is to acknowledge him as the supreme instrument of soteriology. Likewise, soteriology is in itself conditioned by the *tahqiq,* the realization of the *true meaning* of all exoteric forms, just as this realization is conditioned by the *ta'wil,* the function of the Imam. Once more, what this Imamology envisages essentially is not the empirical figure of any particular Imam, but the reality and the essence of an eternal Imam, of whom each Imam individually is the earthly exemplification. This is the eternal Imam to whom reference is made in the Quranic expression *mawlana,* 'our lord', or whom it is said that he always existed, exists and will exist. All the various versions of his Coming are relative to men's perception. In the divine pleroma {*'alam-iKhuda)* these mutations have no place.

2. An immediate consequence of this is that knowledge of the Imam, of the Perfect Man, *is* the only knowledge of God possible to man, since the Imam is the initial theophany. In the phrase quoted above, as in all similar phrases, the speaker is the eternal Imam. 'Prophets pass and change. We are eternal Men.' 'I knew God before Heaven and Earth were created.' 'The light cast by the lamp is not the lamp itself; but if this light did not exist, how would one know what the lamp is, or even whether or not there is a lamp and where it is?' 'The Men of God are not God himself; nevertheless, they are inseparable from God.' Because the Imamate is the primordial theophany, the revelation of the divine Abyss and the *guide* towards this Revelation, the Imam is the supreme *hujjah,* the guarantor who *answers for* the

unknowable divinity. This is stated in the great sermon preached by the Imam Hasan 'a/a *dhikrihi al-salam,* on the 8th August 1164 CE, when he proclaimed the Great Resurrection at Alamut:'*Mawlana* (our lord) is the Resurrector *(qa'im al-qiyama);* he is the lord of beings; he is the lord who is the absolute act of being *[al-wujud al-mutlaq);* he excludes all existential determination, for he transcends them all; he opens up the threshold of his Mercy, and through the light of his Knowledge he causes all beings to see, hear and speak for all eternity'. Only the eternal Imam, as a theophany, makes possible an ontology: since he is *the* revealed one, he is *being* as such. He is the absolute Person, the eternal divine Face *(chahrah-'i Khuda* in Persian), the supreme divine Attribute and supreme Name of God. In his earthly form he is the epiphany of the supreme Word *(mazhar-i kalimah-'i a 'la),* the Bringer of Truth in every age *(muhiqq-i vaqt),* the manifestation of Eternal Man who manifests the Face of God.

A second consequence is that for man, knowledge of self presupposes knowledge of the Imam. On the basis of the statement of the fourth Imam that 'Knowledge of God is knowledge of the Imam', our texts repeat: 'He who dies without having known his Imam, dies the death of the oblivious'. The reason for this may be sought in the specific interpretation given to the maxim repeated by all Islamic spirituals: 'He who knows himself knows his Lord, *that is to say,* he knows his Imam.' this is the knowledge that was promised by the first Imam: 'Be faithful to me, and I will make you as similar to myself as Salman.' It emerges from these texts that knowledge of God, of the Imam and of the self are aspects of one and the same fundamental, liberating knowledge, of the same gnosis.

This is the reason why the Persian texts of the tradition of Alamut emphasize the four possible ways of knowing the Imam. 'One may possess knowledge of his person in its physical form—a knowledge of which even animals are capable. One may possess knowledge of his official name and of his earthly genealogy—a knowledge to which even his enemies have access. There is the knowledge which recognizes his Imamate—a knowledge shared by all the members of the *da'wah.* Finally, there is the knowledge of his Essence according to the eternal reality of his attributes—a knowledge, that is, which presupposes a transcendence of all other modes of knowing. Such knowledge dazzles the soul, and is the privilege of the *hujjah.'* Likewise, there is a

quadruple line of descent relative to the Imam, as follows: according to the flesh; in the spiritual sense; according both to the flesh and in the spiritual sense; and, lastly, according to the flesh, the spiritual sense and the eternal reality of his essence. The Imam's purely spiritual descendant *(farzand-i ma'nawi)* is the *hujjah*—a status which has its archetype in Salman the Persian, and which, according to the promise of the Imam, is exemplified in every faithful initiate. With the promotion of the *hujjah* to the highest rank, the entire traditional hierarchy is modified.

3. *Imamology and the philosophy of resurrection*

1. One can speak here of a radical shift. It is always the case that the hierarchy of the *hudud* denotes their respective degree of proximity to the Imam. But now the meaning of this hierarchy tends to become more interior, and 'the limits' indicate rather the degrees of 'conformity with the Imam' that correspond to stages in the progress of one's inner consciousness. The *ta'wil makes* the hierocosmos {the esoteric hierarchical brotherhood) symbolize with the microcosm. The consequence of this is a fall in the rank assigned to the *natiq,* the prophet who proclaims a Law, and a different appreciation of the cycle of prophecy. Both these are corollaries of the elevation of the rank of *hujjah.* The predominance of the syzygy Prophet-Imam is replaced by that of the Imam and his *hujjah.*

In Twelver Shiite theosophy, the mission of the prophet of Islam marked the full noonday hour {the equilibrium between *zahir* and *batin).* Shortly after began the decline towards evening, the return into the night of esotericism, the cycle of the pure *walayah.* In Ismaili theosophy, the entry of the *haqiqah*—the pure spiritual religion—into the night of esotericism began not with Muhammad, Seal of prophets, but with the very first prophet, Adam, who initiated our present cycle of occultation—that is to say, it began with the beginnings of present humanity. Ismaili pessimism confronts this radical disaster with its entire philosophy of Resurrection, with its revolt, even, against the *shari'ah.*

The six great periods of 'legislative prophecy' are always seen as the *hexaemeron,* the 'six days' of the creation of the religious cosmos or hierocosmos, each 'day' being counted as a 'millennium'. But in point of fact, the six 'days' are the night of divine religion *(shab-i din),*

the night of the Imam, because during these six days the literal Law or *shari'ah* of the legislative prophets is the veil hiding the reality, hiding the sun of the Imam. Just as the sun is replaced by the moon in illuminating the night, the Imam is replaced by him who is his *hujjah,* his proof or guarantor (his 'Salman'). Knowledge of the Imam in his true Essence will only become manifest on the *seventh day,* that is, on the day after the still-continuing *hexaemeron.* Only the seventh day will truly partake of the nature of day, that on which the sun shines forth {the *yawm al-qiyamah* or day of the Resurrection).

2. Within the context of this vision of things, the drop in rank of the prophet-legislator needs no explanation. Whereas in Twelver Imamism, as in Fatimid Ismailism, he ranked first (being the earthly homologue of the First Intelligence), in the Ismailism of Alamut he ranks third. It seems, indeed, that in this the Imamology of Alamut merely reproduces an order of precedence that existed in pre-Fatimid Ismailism, one represented by the order of succession of the three symbolic letters *'ayn* {'Ali, the Imam), *sin* (Salman, Gabriel, the *hujjah),* and *man* (Muhammad, the Prophet). The Prophet, in fact, in his capacity as a *natiq*—the annunciator of a *shari'ah*—has the rank and function of a *da'i* who 'convokes' men *towards* the Imam who is the secret meaning of the *shari'ah* he annunciates. This is why each prophet, at the beginning of his vocation as *da'i,* has gone to meet the *hujjah* of the Imam of his time, who stands in the same relation to him as Khidr-Elijah, Moses' prophet-initiator, stood to Moses. (In the Ismaili exegesis of the history of the prophets, Paradise for Adam, the ark for Noah, the Burning Bush for Moses, Mary for Jesus, and Salman for Muhammad are all interpreted as figurations of the meeting with the hujjah.) Every initiate in his turn follows the example of the prophet- *da'i* and advances towards the same encounter, towards spiritual union with the *hujjah:* they become gnostics *('arif)* who share in the same gnosis. This is the meaning of the Imam's promise to his disciple when he tells him that he will make him as similar to himself M Salman. The diminution in the number of 'grades' in the hierarchy of Alamut in no way corresponds to a 'loss of man-power'; it corresponds to a metaphysical deepening of the concept of the Imamate, with the result that prophetic philosophy culminates in a philosophy of resurrection.

The Imam stands in the same relation to his *hujjah* as the creative

Esto to the first Intelligence. Such is the privileged situation of the *hujjah,* of all those whose archetype is Salman: those of whom it is said that from the very beginning the spiritual essence *[ma'na)* of each of their persons is the same as the Imam's (whence comes the fourth of the modes of knowledge and filiation described above). 'To be promoted to the rank of *hujjah'* is to exemplify in one's own person the case of Salman, to attain to the 'Salman of your being'—the 'Salman of the microcosm', as it is called in the ancient treatise *Umm al-Kitab,* which we cited above. With regard to the secret of such an attainment, the following few lines may perhaps yield the supreme message of Ismaili philosophy: 'The Imam has said: I am with my friends wherever they seek me, on the mountain, in the plain and in the desert. The man to whom I have revealed my Essence, that is to say the mystical knowledge of myself, has no further need of my physical proximity. And this is the Great Resurrection.'

4. *Ismailism and Sufism*

1. The texts of the Ismaili tradition of Alamut show us both the way in which Imamology fructifies in mystical experience, and how it presupposes such an experience. The conjunction of Ismailism and Sufism, which took place after the time of Alamut, refers us to the as yet unsolved problem of origins. If we agree with the Shiite spirituals that Sunni Sufism is something which, by endowing the Prophet alone with the attributes of the Imam and thereby making the *walayah* into an Imamology without an Imam, parted company with Shiism at a given moment,then the Ismailism of Alamut does no more than restore the old order of things. Hence its importance for all Shiite Sufism after this period, as well as for the entire cultural field whose language was Persian.

2. We have just seen how the replacement of the pair *Nabi-Imam* by the pair Imam-hujjah reflects the process of mystical interiorization. In a commentary on Mahmud al-Shabistari's 'Rosary of Mystery' by an anonymous Ismaili writer, the *unio mystica* of the Imam and the *hujjah* is mediated in the magnificent symbol of the olive tree growing at the top of Mount Sinai (Quran 95:1-2). There are two mountains, the mountain of intelligence and the mountain of love. In his meditation on the secret of the earthly human Form, in which is concealed the

love of the 'hidden Treasure which longed to be known', the mystical pilgrim discovers that his own person, like that of Moses, *is* the Sinai at the summit (or the heart) of which is revealed the theophanic Form of the eternal Imam. Upon this summit, or within this sanctuary, the 'Soul of the soul' is revealed to the soul as the mystical olive tree which stands on the invisible heights of the Sinai of love. The pilgrim must climb the Sinai of love, which is higher than the mountain of Intelligence; for although the intellect is the guide leading to the secret of the theophany, it is also the guide who ultimately steps aside, like Virgil in the presence of Beatrice.

As we have seen, in performing this inner pilgrimage the disciple does no more than repeat the initial step of each prophet in search of the Imam. To reach the summit of the Sinai of his soul is, for the mystic, to realize the state of Salman the Pure, of the *hujjah:* it is to attain to the Soul of the soul *(jan-i jan).* This Soul is the Imam, the olive tree growing on the top of the Sinai of love; and the soul of the mystic is this very love, since the Sinai is the Sinai of his being. Thus, what the soul discovers at the summit, or the heart, of her being is the Imam as the eternal beloved. The syzygy of the Imam and his *hujjah* becomes the inner dialogue between the Beloved and the Lover. The Soul of his soul is her to whom he is able to say *thou,* it is his 'I' in the second person. As it was for Moses on Sinai, in the presence of the Soul of his soul, the 'Moses of his being', his 'I' in the first person, is obliterated. In contemplating herself in the Soul of the soul, the soul becomes the object of contemplation of the Soul of the soul, and this latter, in its place and time, utters the words: *Ego sum Deus.* In this manner the famous pronouncement of al-Hallaj (*ana al-haqq),* repeated over the centuries by the Sufis, acquires a truly Shiite flavour. Imamology frees it from the trap of transcendental monism, which created so many problems for reflexive thought.

3. Ultimately, the mystical experience of the Sufis encompasses a metaphysic which baffles both the dialectic of philosophers pure and simple, and that of the theologians of the *kalam.* It will be clear, from what has been said here, that there is yet another form of metaphysics in Islam, without which it may be impossible to explain the beginnings and the development of Sufism. This other form is essentially the Shiite gnosis which goes back to the Imams themselves. Our endeavour here—the first, as we believe, of its kind—has been to show the unique

originality of this form, insofar as it represents the response of prophetic philosophy to the demands of a prophetic religion. Because it is essentially the explanation of the hidden spiritual meaning, this form of metaphysics is eschatological; and being eschatological, it remains open to the future.

With the dialectical theologians of the Sunni *kalian* we enter an altogether different 'clime'.

. The Sunni *Kalam*

A. THE MU'TAZILITES

1. *The origins*

1. The Arabic word *kalam* signifies word or speech. The word *mutakallim* designates him who speaks, the orator (in grammar, the first person). It is not possible here to trace the evolution whereby the word *kalam* came to mean simply theology, and the word *mutakallimun* (those engaged in the science of the *kalam, 'ilm al-kalam)* came to mean the 'theologians'. This would involve a more detailed analysis of the genesis of the problem, touched on below, of the Quran as *kalam Allah*, the 'Word of God'. Furthermore, the science of the *kalam,* as the scholastic theology of Islam, came to mean more particularly a theology professing atomism, an atomism which, while it is reminiscent of the atomism of Democritus and Epicurus, is entirely different in context.

As the scholasticism of Islam, the *kalam* manifests itself as pure rational *dialectic* which operates upon the concepts of theology. We are dealing neither with mystical gnosis (*'irfan),* nor with the 'science of the heart' of which the Shiite Imams were the first to speak. Moreover, as the philosophers al-Farabi and Averroes, as well as Mulla .Sadra al-Shirazi, have emphasized, the *mutakallimun* are above all apologists, devoted not so much to a demonstrated or demonstrable t ruth as to upholding, with the aid of all the resources of their theological dialectic, the articles of their traditional religious credo. Such a task is doubtless inescapable where a religious community is concerned: there was also a Shiite *kalam.* But the Imams were already warning their followers against any exclusive attachment to the problems and method of the *kalam.* This is because mystical theosophy— *'irfan*— functions in a manner which is hermeneutical rather than dialectic, and keeps itself as aloof as possible from all 'intellectualism'.

those known as *Mu'tazilites* are considered to be the earliest

mutakallimun. They form, without any doubt, a school of speculative religious thought which is of prime importance, their labours being based on the fundamental religious facts of Islam. But what we have already explained in chapter II absolves us from subscribing to a current point of view which regards this situation as the privilege of this school. Rather this school does no more than develop one aspect of these facts, the totality of whose aspects demands, if it is to be fully grasped, no longer a conceptual dialectic but a 'prophetic philosophy'. We must confine ourselves here to a brief description of the Mu'tazilites and their doctrine, following this with an account of the life and work of the great figure of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari.

2. The name *Mu'tazilites* designates a group of Muslim thinkers which was formed in the town of Basrah during the first half of the second century AH. Their movement expanded so rapidly that the name came to designate a considerable proportion of the cultured Muslim elite. Baghdad, the capital of the 'Abbasid empire, was during the reign of several caliphs the centre of their school, and for a time their doctrine was even adopted as the official doctrine of Sunni Islam.

Several explanations have been given of their name. The heresiographer al-Baghdadi, for example, believes that the name *Mu'tazilite* derives from the fact that the sect was 'separate' from the Muslim community because of its conception of 'sin' and of the 'sinner'. {Of course, the use of these two words bears no relation here to the specifically Christian notion of sin with all that it implies.) In fact, the Mu'tazilites consider sin to be an intermediate state between faith *(Iman)* and unbelief *{kufr).* Al-Shahrastani voices another opinion: Wasil ibn 'Ata' (d. 131/748), founder of the Mu'tazilite school, was opposed to his teacher Hasan al-Basri {d. 110/728) on the question of grave sins. Having given public expression to his point of view, he left Hasan al-Basri's circle, and his followers formed, around the pillar of the Great Mosque, a new group to which Wasil ibn 'Ata' expounded his doctrine. Thereupon Hasan al-Basri cried, 'Wasil has *separated* himself from us *(i'tazala 'anna)* From that time onwards Wasil and his followers were known by the name *of Mu'tazilites,* the 'separate', the 'secessionists'. Al-Nawbakhti {in his *Firaq al-Shi'ah),* however, expresses a Shiite point of view: 'Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, Muhammad ibn Maslamah, Usamah ibn Zayd—they all separated themselves from 'Ali (the first Imam); they abstained from

fighting either for or against him. Hence they were named *Mu'tazilites.* They are the ancestors of all the later Mu'tazilites.'

3. Two ideas emerge from these different opinions. (1) The term *Mu'tazilite* must have been applied to the followers of this doctrine by their enemies. The name is therefore in itself a term of disapproval: those who separated themselves, who seceded. (2) The initial cause of Mu'tazilism must have been a 'political' choice. In fact, if one gives serious consideration both to the Mu'tazilite doctrine and to the choice in question, one is bound to conclude that 'politics' is not a sufficient reason for either.

As regards the name *Mu'tazilites,* it is inconceivable that it should have been applied to them solely by their enemies. Throughout their history they have borne their name with pride, not as an implied condemnation. Surely, therefore, it had another meaning for them. Two principles are at the heart of their doctrine: with regard to God, the principle of transcendence and of absolute Unity; with regard to man, the principle of individual liberty involving direct responsibility for our actions. Rightly or wrongly, they believed that they were alone in upholding and developing these principles. (As a matter of fact, the Shiites are in complete agreement with them about the principle of human responsibility.) We should observe that the Quran, representing the Seven Sleepers as models of faith and loyalty, actually defines their attitude by the word *i'tizal* (18:16), because in their worship of the One they had *separated* themselves from a community which had fallen into unbelief. As the Mu'tazilites understand it, the qualification does not denigrate them; if they 'separated' themselves, it was in order to preserve the purity of the *tawhid* and to defend justice and human liberty.

On the other hand, the political events which took place in the Muslim community, however important these might have been, cannot be considered sufficient reason for the appearance of Mu'tazilism. Of course, the investiture of Abu Bakr as caliph of the Muslim community, instead and in place of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib; the assassination of 'Uthman, the third caliph; the splitting up of the Muslim community into various camps after the bloody struggle between Mu'awiyah and 'Ali—all these events forced the Muslims, including the thinkers, to take a stand in the lace of the problems confronting them.

Yet here again, what was at stake in these struggles infinitely

surpasses what we normally think of as 'politics'. Is the investiture of the lawful Imam of the community a purely *social* question, with the Imam subject to the vote of the Muslim community and answerable to it? Or does his function possess a *metaphysical* significance, a significance which is intimately bound up with the destiny of the community beyond this world, and unable, for this very reason, to depend upon a majority vote? What is at issue is the essence of Shiite Islam (see above, ch. II). And—quite independently of their concern for justice—what is the actual theological and legal status of those who have rebelled against the invested Imam? We are not concerned with theory, but with a reality which is concrete and existential. The Mu'tazilites had to find a solution which accorded with their thought.

4. Other factors, too, enter into the elaboration of this thought. There is their reaction and their general attitude with regard to the non-Muslim groups established at the centre of Muslim society: the Mazdeans in Iraq, the Christians and Jews in Syria. H. S. Nyberg considers, rightly, that one of the determining factors of Mu'tazilite thought was their opposition to the dualism of certain Iranian sects which had spread into Kufah and Basrah. This is corroborated by other evidence, mainly from the *Kitab al-Aghani:* Wasil ibn 'Ata' and 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd, the two great figures of Mu'tazilism in its infancy, often took part in meetings organized in the house of a nobleman of Azd, in which those present explained and defended the dualistic doctrine of ancient Iran.

The Mu'tazilites paid equal attention to certain Jewish and Christian ideas, the incidence of which might have a bearing on dogmatic and moral theology as well as on the very concept of Islam and the person of him who founded it. It could justifiably be said that the Mu'tazilite conception of the divine Unity was motivated in part by reaction against certain aspects of the Christian dogma of the Trinity. In fact, the Mu'tazilites deny that the divine Essence possesses any attributes. They deny, too, that attributes possess any positive reality distinct from the single Essence: if one were to affirm the contrary, one would find oneself, they maintain, in the presence of a divinity which was no longer just triune but multiple, because the divine attributes are unlimited.

Similarly, their doctrine affirming that the Quran is *created* can be viewed as being in opposition to the Christian dogma of the Incarnation. In fact, according to them, to say that the Quran *is the* divine uncreated Word which manifests itself in time in the form of Arabic speech, is

equivalent to saying what Christians say about the Incarnation: that Christ *is* the divine uncreated Word, who manifests himself in time in the form of a human being. This is so because the difference between the dogma of the *uncreated* Quran and the dogma of the Incarnation lies not so much in the nature of the divine Word itself as in the modality of its manifestation: whereas, for Christianity, the Word was made flesh in Christ, the same Word was here made annunciation in the Quran. {We saw above in I, 1 how the *'irfani* philosophers viewed this stormy dispute. Shiite Imamology does not separate the problem of the Quranic Revelation from the problem of its spiritual exegesis [see above, ch. II]. Hence, comparisons of Imamology with the problems of Christology possess a significance even more specific than that of the relationship mentioned here, in that Imamology always opts for exactly the type of solution which official Christian dogma rejects.)

2. *The doctrine*

It is difficult to start by speaking of a single Mu'tazilite doctrine if one wishes to do justice to the richness and diversity of its many forms, and to preserve what is peculiar to each of its thinkers. Nevertheless, there are five principles which are accepted by all Mu'tazilites, and no one could be a member of their school who did not accept them. Of these five principles, the first two are concerned with divinity; the third possesses an eschatological aspect; and the fourth and fifth are concerned with moral theology. What follows is a brief description of them.

(1) The *tawhid* {the divine Unity). This is the fundamental dogma of Islam. The Mu'tazilites did not, therefore, 'invent' it, but can be distinguished by the interpretations they give of it and by the way in which they apply these interpretations to other areas of theology. The Mu'tazilites liked to call themselves the 'men of the *tawhid' (ahl al-tawhid). ln Maqalat al-Islamiyin, al-*Ash'ari describes the Mu'tazilite conception of the *tawhid* as follows: 'God is unique, nothing is like him; he is neither body, nor individual, nor substance, nor accident. He is beyond time. He cannot dwell in a place or within a being; he is not the object of any creatural attribute or qualification. He is neither conditioned nor determined, neither engendered nor engendering. He is beyond the perception of the senses. The eyes cannot see him, observation cannot attain him, the imagination cannot comprehend

him. He is a thing, but he is not like other things; he is omniscient, all-powerful, but his omniscience and his all-mightiness cannot be compared to anything created. He created the world without any pre-established archetype and without an auxiliary.'

This conception of the divine Being and of his unity is static, not dynamic. Ontologically, it is limited to the plane of unconditioned being, and does not extend to the plane of non-unconditioned being. The result is the negation of the divine attributes, the affirmation of the created Quran, and the denial of all possibility of the vision of God in the world beyond *(cf.* above, II, A, 3). These serious consequences have played a considerable role in the dogmatic thought of Islam, and have brought the community to an awareness of fundamental religious values.

(2) Divine justice *(al-'adl).* In their consideration of divine-justice, the Mu'tazilites take into account human responsibility and human liberty. {We have already noted their accord with the Shiites on this point.) In so doing they affirm that the principle of divine justice involves the liberty and responsibility of man, or rather, that our freedom and responsibility proceed from the principle itself of divine justice. If it were otherwise, the idea of reward or punishment in the hereafter would be meaningless, and the idea of divine justice deprived of its foundation. Yet how is it possible to reconcile the idea of human liberty and the fact of man as master of his destiny with certain passages in the Quran which affirm the opposite—as, for example, when it is expressly stated that everything that happens to us happens according to the divine *mashi'ah,* or that everything we do is written in a celestial register? The Mu'tazilites' answer to this is that the divine *mashi'ah* (it could be translated as 'innate divine Will') which encompasses all things, denotes neither God's acts of volition *(iradah)* nor his acts of command *(amr),* but his eternal design and his creative genius, these being two aspects of his infinite knowledge. Similarly, the Quranic statement that 'everything is written in a celestial register' expresses metaphysically divine knowledge itself. This knowledge is not opposed to human liberty, because its object is not the *act,* as in the case of volition and command, but *being.*

Moreover, in affirming human freedom, the Mu'tazilites maintain that this principle does not proceed simply from our idea of divine justice, but is, over and above all, fully in agreement with the Quran

itself when it states expressly that each soul is responsible for what it acquires: 'Whoever does what is just and right, does so for his own good; and whoever does evil, does so to his own hurt' (41.46 and 45.16). This verse and many others affirm human freedom. Finally, all Muslims admit that God has imposed obligations on them, cultural, social, moral, etc. How is one to conceive of the idea of obligation without admitting that man is free and the master of his actions?

(3) Things promised in the hereafter *(wa'd* and *wa'id).* All Muslim sects and doctrines accept that God has promised to reward his faithful and has threatened unbelievers with punishment. The Mu'tazilites link this article of faith with their concepts of divine justice and of human liberty. Divine justice stipulates that he who remains faithful should not receive the same treatment as he who is guilty of unbelief. And, granted that man is free, it follows that he is responsible for his actions, whether good or bad. Thus the idea of divine grace plays a very unobtrusive part in Mu'tazilite teaching: what predominates is the idea of justice.

(4) The intermediary situation *(al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn).* As we saw above, this thesis was responsible for the break—the 'separation'—between Wasil ibn 'Ata', founder of the Mu'tazilite school, and his teacher Hasan al-Basri. Their disagreement turned on the concept of 'sin'. The Mu'tazilites view sin in relation to faith and to unbelief, and theologically and legally regard the situation of the 'sinner' as different both from that of the Muslim and from that of the non-Muslim. The Mu'tazilites, in common with all the theologians and lawgivers of Islam, distinguish between two types of sin: *sagha'ir,* or mild faults, and *kaba'ir,* grave faults. The faults in the first category do not merit expulsion from the circle of believers, so long as the sinner does not repeat his offence. The faults in the second category are also divided into two types: *kufr* (unbelief), and the rest. The latter, according to the Mu'tazilites, exclude the Muslim from the community, even though he is not necessarily considered a *kafir* (an unbeliever in the absolute sense). The sinner is thus in an intermediary situation, neither a believer nor an unbeliever. This 'in-between' view also had its problems.

(5) The moral imperative *(al-amr bi-al-ma'ruf).* The last of the five essential Mu'tazilite theses is concerned with the life of the community;

it envisages the putting into practice of the principles of justice and liberty in social behaviour. For the Mu'tazilites, justice does not merely consist in the personal avoidance of evil and injustice; it is also an act in which the whole community co-operates in order to create an atmosphere of equality and social harmony, thanks to which each individual is able to realize his potentialities. Similarly, liberty and human responsibility are not confined simply to the exercise of the individual's various faculties, but extend, or should extend, to the entire community. This is also a principle which is often expressed in the holy Book of Islam. But the ingenuity of the Mu'tazilite school lay in basing the principle of moral and social action on the theological principle of justice and human liberty.

B. ABU AL-HASAN AL-ASH'ARl

1. *The life and works of al-Ash'ari*

1. Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Isma'il al-Ash'ari was born at Basrah in the year 260/873. From his youth he was an adherent of the Mu'tazilite school, whose doctrines he studied under one of the most representative teachers of the sect at that time, al-Jubba'i (d. 303/915). Till the age of forty he followed the teaching of the school, and throughout this period he undertook the defence of the Mu'tazilite doctrines, to which end he himself wrote a fair number of books. Then, on the evidence of his biographers, when he had reached the age of forty, al-Ash'ari shut himself up in his house for a retreat lasting at least two weeks. On emerging from this retreat, he burst into the Great Mosque at Basrah at the hour of the meeting for prayer. Here he announced in a loud voice: 'He who knows me, knows me. To him who knows me not, I will make myself known. I am 'Ali ibn Isma'il al-Ash'ari. Formerly I professed the Mu'tazilite doctrine, believing in the created Quran, denying the divine vision in the hereafter, denying God all attributes and all positive qualifications_Let all bear witness that I now renounce this doctrine and abandon it forever.'

The biographers have found many reasons to explain this astonishing reversal. It seems that the main reason must be sought both in himself and in the external situation—that is, in the division of the Sunni Muslim community, then split into two extremes. Where the personal inner reason is concerned, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari was profoundly opposed to the excessive rationalism of the Mu'tazilite teachers in their con-

ception of God and of human salvation. Had not the divinity, the object of their speculations, become a pure abstraction, bearing no relation either to the world or to man? What meaning and metaphysical implication can knowledge and worship have for man if everything is determined by the simple fact of causality in creation? It pained Abu al-Hasan to see the point to which Sunni Muslim opinion was dominated by extremist tendencies. On the one hand, there were the Mu'tazilites with their abstract speculations, and on the other hand there were the literalists, who, in reaction to Mu'tazilite rationalism, had stiffened their attitude still further. Thus, al-Ash'ari's 'conversion'—the radical reversal that he underwent—must be explained both by his intention to resolve his own problem, and by his determination to offer the divided community a way out of the impasse.

2. Al-Ash'ari wrote a large number of works, both during his Mu'tazilite period and after his conversion. He says himself that he must have written at least ninety books, encompassing almost the entire body of theological knowledge of the period. He wrote a commentary on the Quran. He composed an anthology on the *shari'ah*, an anthology of *hadith* and anecdotes, treatises against the materialists, the *kharijites*, and, after his conversion, works in which he criticized the Mu'tazilites. Among those of his works which have come down to us, two are of particular importance.

In the first of these, *Maqalat al-Islamiyin*, al-Ash'ari gives a precise and objective description of all the doctrines known in his time. This treatise can be considered one of the most important *summae* in the history of dogma, and as possibly the best in the history of doctrine and dogma in Islam. It is divided into three parts. The first contains a detailed description of the different Islamic sects and doctrines; the second describes the attitudes and practices of the 'men of the *hadith'*, the literalists; and the final section deals with the different branches of the *kalam.*

The second work, *Kitab al-Ibanah*, is strictly devoted to a description of the doctrine of Sunni Islam. It begins by praising Ahmad ibn Hanbal, founder of the Hanbalite juridical rite, who died in 241/855. It then goes onto deal, in no particular order, with different theological themes, all of them developed in the light of the writer's new orientation. Although we can say definitely that this second work was written during

the second period of al-Ash'ari's life, we cannot risk saying the same of the first.

Al-Ash'ari died in Baghdad in 324/935, having lived a full and admirable life.

2. *The doctrine of al-Ash'ari*

1. *The tendencies of the system.* Al-Ash'ari's system is dominated by two tendencies which, though apparently contradictory, are actually complementary. On the one hand, he appears to approximate so closely to one or another juridical school of Islam that he has sometimes been called Shafi'ite, sometimes Malikite and sometimes Hanbalite. On the other hand, he manifests an obvious reserve, for his dearest wish was above all to reconcile the different schools of Sunnism, all of which, in his view, agreed with regard to their principles, and only differed in the matter of their application. Ibn' Asakir gives the following account of his point of view: 'Every *mujtahid* is right, and all the *mujtahids* are established on a solid ground of truth. Their differences are not to do with principles, but are the result of their application.' In the domain of dogma or, more specifically, in the domain of the proofs adduced to support dogma, al-Ash'ari is in no way contemptuous of the value of rational demonstration as used by the literalists. But although he does not accept, on the grounds that it was practised neither by the Prophet nor by his Companions, that the use of rational demonstration is a heresy, he does not go so far as to regard reason as an absolute criterion where either faith or the fundamental facts of religion are concerned.

Al-Ash'ari thus takes a stand that is opposed to the Mu'tazilites, for two essential reasons.

(a) To attribute an absolute value to reason amounts not to upholding religion, as the Mu'tazilites say, but to suppressing it by substituting reason pure and simple for faith. Why should I have faith in God and in his revelations if the rational faculty within me is superior to the actual facts of religion? (b) In the Quran it is often said that faith in the *ghayb*—the invisible, the supra-sensible, the mystery—is an essential principle of the religious life, without which faith can have no foundation. But the *ghayb* is that which surpasses rational demonstration. Therefore, to adopt reason as the absolute criterion in the domain of dogma is incompatible with the principle of faith in the *ghayb*.

Al-Ash'Aii's system of thought is thus distinguished by the wish to reconcile two extremes. This tendency appears in almost all the solutions he proposed, and it is the reason why his thought and doctrine had such a large following in Sunni Islam for several centuries. By way of example, we will look at the position adopted by al-Ash'ari before three great theological problems: the divine Attributes, the Quran, and human freedom.

2. *The divine Attributes.* As we saw, the Mu'tazilites believed that God is deprived of all positive attributes, in the sense that all divine qualifications must be understood as being the essence itself. The literalists, on the other hand, by reason of their naive conception of the divine Attributes, came to represent the divinity as a complex of names and qualifications alongside the divine essence itself. The Mu'tazilite attitude is known in the history of dogma by the name of *ta'til*, that is to say, it consists in depriving God of all operative action and ends finally in agnosticism. (It should be noted that the meaning of the root word % from which *ta'til* is derived, was applied in ancient Arabic usage to the well without water and to the childless woman.) In contrast with this, the attitude of the extreme literalists is known by the name *tashbih* (anthropomorphism). We have already encountered these two terms in another context (see above ch. II).

The solution proposed by al-Ash'ari concedes that the divine Being possesses in a real sense the Attributes and Names mentioned in the Quran. Insofar as these Names and Attributes have a positive reality, they are distinct from the essence, but nevertheless they do not have cither existence or reality apart from it. The happy inspiration of al-Ash 'ari in this matter was on the one hand to distinguish essence and attribute as concepts, and on the other hand to see that the duality between essence and attribute should be situated not on the quantitative but on the qualitative level—something which Mu'tazilite thinking had failed to grasp.

When, therefore, the Quran and certain *hadith* represent the divinity in anthropomorphic form (God as possessing hands and face, as seated on a Throne, etc.), the Mu'tazilites saw it all as metaphor. The hand It the metaphorical designation of power; the face signifies the essence; the fact that God is seated on the Throne is a metaphorical image of the divine reign, and so on. For the literalists, these are all real phenomena about God, which must be seen and understood as such.

Al-Ash'ari is in agreement with the literalists regarding the reality of these phenomena assigned to God, but he warns against imparting any physical material sense to them when attributing them to God. In his view, the Muslim must believe that God really does possess hands, face and so on, but without 'asking how'. This is the famous *bi-lakayfa,* in which faith attests that it can dispense with reason. In short, the Mu'tazilites were reduced to speaking about metaphors; al-Ash'ari's great labour ended by leaving faith and reason face to face, unmediated.

3. *The dogma of the uncreated Quran.* The Mu'tazilites believe that the Quran is the *created* divine Word, without distinguishing between the word as an eternal divine attribute and the Arabic annunciation by which this is represented in Quran. The literalists respond to this way of seeing things with categorical rejection, but they on the other hand confuse the divine Word with its human annunciation in "time. Even more serious is the fact that certain of them consider the Quran to be eternal not only as regards its content and the words of which it is composed, but also as regards everything which goes into its material constitution—for example, the pages, the ink, the binding, and so on.

Al-Ash'ari's solution lies between these two extremes. He considers that the nature of the word, whether human or divine, is not limited, as the Mu'tazilites believe, to what is pronounced and composed of sounds and articulated words; it is also the soul's discourse *(hadith nafsi),* and as such is independent of verbal manifestation *(hadith lafzi).* When he affirms that the Quran is eternal, he means the divine attribute of the *kalam* subsisting eternally in God and, as such, exempt from all verbal and phonetic articulation. But the Quran is also composed of words; it is written. In this form, it is a created and temporal fact, contrary to what the literalists believe. But how can these two contradictory aspects, created and uncreated, come together in a single fact such as the Quran? Here again al-Ash'ari counsels the believer to practise his famous principle: 'Have faith without asking *how.'*

4. *Human liberty.* In resolving this problem, al-Ash'ari has recourse not to the notion of *qudrah* (creative power) in the Mu'tazilite sense, but to the notion of *kasb* (acquisition). Once more he has to find a solution between two extremes: the Mu'tazilites, upholders of the *qudrah,* and the fatalists, upholders of the *kasb.* Al-Ash'ari believes,

not without reason, that the Mu'tazilite view introduces a kind of dualism as regards divine action. In effect, according to the Mu'tazilites, man is not only free and responsible, but also possesses *qudrah,* that is to say, creative power, the ability to create his own works. In order to avoid the risk of setting up another creative power alongside the divine power, while at the same time conferring on man the freedom which makes him responsible for his actions, al-Ash'ari attributes to him not *qudrah,* the creation of his works, but *kasb,* the 'acquisition' of his works. He accepts the distinction made by the Mu'tazilites between the two types of action possible to man: action which is done under compulsion, and action which is free. He also accepts their thesis that man is perfectly aware of this difference. But he considers the *qudrah—the* creative power of human actions—as exterior to man, not immanent in him. He also distinguishes, in every free action on the part of man, the act of creation which is God's part in it, and the act of acquisition which is man's. All man's freedom consists in this *co-Incidence* between God the 'creator' and man the 'acquirer'.

In all the solutions that he proposes, al-Ash'ari's involvement is not •o much with speculative and rational concerns as with spiritual and religious themes. He is seeking above all to give a meaning to faith in God, in a God whose qualifications are not illusory, because he is both essence and attribute, and can consequently be the object of the believer's worship and love. Whether his attempt be regarded as a success or, for lack of sufficient metaphysical arguments, as a failure, what al'Ash'ari once again is seeking with complete probity when he affirms the simultaneity of the created and uncreated aspects of the Quran, is the mysterious and miraculous union of the eternal and the ephemeral.

C. ASH'ARISM

I. *The vicissitudes of the Ash'arite school*

1. The Ash'arite school, which was founded in the middle of the fourth/tenth century by the direct disciples of al-Ash'ari, derives its name from that of its teacher (in Arabic one speaks of the *Ash'ariyah* or *Asha'irah).* Over several centuries this school almost completely dominated Sunni Islam, while at certain times and in certain regions Ash'arism was actually identified with Sunnism.

Towards the end of his life, a group had formed around Abu al-Hasan

al-Ash'ari, made up of many followers who admired his exemplary life, his thinking steeped in religious values, and his concern to protect these values. His followers found in him a refuge both against the narrow literalism of the men of the *hadith*, and against the excessive rationalism of the Mu'tazilites. In this way, Ash'arism began to take shape in the lifetime of the master.

Scarcely, however, had Ash'arism affirmed its existence and assumed a definite form alongside other schools of the period, when it became a target against which every attack was directed. First and foremost, the Mu'tazilites had taken to heart the volte-face of their former adherent, al-Ash'ari; they accused the Ash'arite school of pandering to the masses through its opportunism, and launched against it the ever-facile reproach of 'syncretism'. Similarly, the literalists, with the Hanbalites at their head, expressed amazement at the advent of this newcomer who, while claiming to avoid the trap of *i'tizal*, had not the courage simply to return to the sources—that is to say, to the literal revealed text and the primitive tradition, as this is recognized by Sunni Islam.

There was yet another complicating factor. At the very moment when al-Ash'ari became aware, in Basrah and Baghdad, of the problems facing Islam, and set out to look for a solution to them, another thinker, likewise trained in Sunnism, became aware of the same problems and conceived the same aim. This was Abu Mansural-Maturidi (d. 333/944 in Samarqand, in the East of the Islamic world); and his followers saw the endeavours of the Ash'arite school as a reform which failed, and they criticized its conservatism and conformism. Since the labours of Ash'arism had stopped half-way, the followers of al-Maturidi attempted to bring about the renewal themselves, and to restore true Sunnism.

2. In spite of all the criticisms levelled at it in its infancy, the Ash'arite school developed and expanded until with time it became the mouthpiece of orthodox Sunnism over a large part of the Islamic universe. But in the middle of the fifth/eleventh century, the movement was checked and went through a difficult period. The Iranian princes of the Buyid dynasty were the true masters of the 'Abbasid empire. They were Shiites, and they favoured a kind of synthesis between Mu'tazilite thought and certain aspects of Shiite thought. But as soon as the Turkish Saljuq princes, who were of Sunni persuasion, took power, the situation

changed. Ash'arism regained its privileged position in Muslim society, and the school even received the support of official authorities, in particular that of the famous Saljuq vizir Nizam al-Mulk (d. 485/1093: this state of affairs makes it clear what it was that the Ismailis of Alamut were fighting against so desperately).

Nizam al-Mulk founded the two great universities of Baghdad and Nishapur. What was taught there was Ash'arism, which then became the official doctrine of the 'Abbasid empire. It was during this period that its representatives became the mouthpieces of the Sunni doctrine itself. Form this strong position the Ash'arites went on to attack the sects and doctrines which did not conform to their 'orthodoxy', not only on the purely ideological level but on the political level as well, insofar as their adversaries represented an opinion which favoured a state or a government hostile to the 'Abbasid caliphate. The offensive launched by al-Ghazali against the 'Batinians' (that is, against Ismaili esotericism) and against the philosophers (see below, V, 7), was aimed also at the Fatimid power of Cairo, because the latter protected the philosophers and adopted the Batinian doctrine as its own.

3. In the seventh/thirteenth century, Ash'arism came up against adversaries of considerable stature in the persons of Taql al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyah and his follower Muhammad ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyah, both of whom were from Damascus. In fact, Ibn Taymiyah, who over the centuries became the father of the *Salafiyya* movement, denied that Ash'arism had accomplished a valid Sunni reform. He proclaimed an integral reform of Sunnism, based principally on the absolute value of the literal text of the Revelation and of the Tradition of the Companions of the Prophet. (Obviously, this 'Tradition' excludes the body of theological traditions going back to the Imams of Shiism.) Despite the courage of Ibn Taymiyah and the incisive force of his critique, Ash'arism has retained its dominant position in Sunni Islam down to the present day. The renaissance of Sunni Islam, no matter what the diverse elements (Mu'tazilism and Salafism, for example) which merge in the Muslim consciousness, cannot but be partial to the preponderance of Ash'arism.

4. Of the great figures whom the Ash'arite school produced in the course of time, the following deserve mention: Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013), author of the *Kitab al-Tamhid*, the first attempt to

provide Ash'arism with a real doctrinal system; Ibn Turaki Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Turaki (d. 406/1015); Abu Ishaq al-Isfara'ini {d. 418/1027); 'Abd al-Qahir ibn Tahir al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037); Abu Ja'far Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Simnani (d. 444/1052); Imam al-Haramayn (al-Juwayni, d. 478/1085), whose *Kitab al-Irshad* is regarded as the consummation of Ash'arism; the famous al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111; *cf.* below, V, 7); Muhammad ibn Tumart(d. *ca.* 524/1130); Abu al-Fath al-Shahrastani (d. 548/1153); Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1210); 'Adud al-Din al-Iji (d. *ca.* 756/1355); Sharif al-Jurjani (d. 816/1413); Abu'Ali al-Sanusi (d. 895/1490).

We have just stressed the fact that Ash'arism not only survived all criticism levelled at it, but succeeded in attaining a key position in Sunni Islam, particularly in the Near East. This achievement was not fortuitous; even though external circumstances, political and other, were favourable to it at a given moment, its success was essentially due to the fact that it provided solutions, seemingly definitive, to two great problems. Unlike the problems that we have already described, these two problems are of the kind which concern the specifically 'exoteric' awareness. The first lies in the sphere of cosmology, in relation to which the Ash'arites school formulated its now classic *atomism.* The second concerns religious psychology and the individual.

2. *Atomism*

1. We saw above (II, B) how Ismaili gnosis gave expression to the concept of Emanation with the principle of the creative Origination (*ibda').* Properly speaking, Emanationism in Islam is represented par *excellence* by the Hellenizing philosophers (see below, ch. V). They understand the fact of creation, such as they study it in the Quranic Revelation, in the light of this fundamental idea. They regard the multiplicity of worlds and of phenomena as proceeding from the absolute One. God is at the summit of Manifestation, and all the beings who constitute this Manifestation are organically linked, from the First Intelligence down to inanimate mattter.

Other schools of thought, notably the Mu'tazilites, in explaining creation and the relationship between God and the world, make use of the idea of a universal causality. As they see it, the phenomena of creation are subject to a whole structure of causes rising level by

level from the secondary causes—those which govern the world of matter—to the primal causes and the Cause of causes.

The Ash'arites were not satisfied either with the philosophers' idea of Emanation or with the idea of universal causality accepted by the Mu'tazilites. As the Ash'arites understand it, the Emanationist view leaves no room for their idea that liberty and will characterize the essence of the divine Being. In their eyes, Emanationism ends by identifying the primary cause with the manifestation, whether on the level of essence or that of existence. In emanated beings, they can see neither created beings as they understand the word 'created' in the Quran, nor the multiple states of a single being, but a multitude of beings so closely and intrinsically linked to their primary cause that they are identified with it.

In the Mu'tazilite idea of eternal causality, the Ash'arites perceive a kind of determinism (because the cause is ontologically linked to its effect and vice versa); and this determinism they see as incompatible with the fundamental idea of the Quran, which affirms the coexistence of absolute divine freedom with absolute divine power. In vain, they think, the Mu'tazilites have tried to justify causality by relating it to the principle of divine wisdom, claiming that wisdom lies at the origin of causality. For the Ash'arites, divine wisdom, like divine power and divine will, are absolute, above any condition or determination.

2. As for a basis and a justification for the idea of the creation of the world, and consequently for the way in which one should envisage the relationship between God and the world, the Ash'arites thought they had found this in their theory of the indivisibility of matter, or *atomism.* Of course, the theory behind this was already familiar to the thinkers of Greece and India; but the Ash'arites developed it in accordance with their own concern to deduce from it consequences which would preserve their conception of God's omnipotence and their idea of creation.

The Ash'arite argument, very briefly, is as follows. Once one admits that matter is indivisible, one ends up by affirming a transcendent primary cause that bestows on matter and on all composite beings their determination and specification. In fact, if matter is divisible in itself, it possesses in itself the possibility and the cause of its determination. The idea of a primary cause then becomes superfluous. If, on the other hand, one accepts the theory that matter in itself (the *atom)* is indivis-

ible, then the intervention of a transcendent primary cause is necessary if this matter is to be determined, specified and quantified in such or such a being. The idea of a creative God is thus seen to be obvious and well-founded.

Correspondingly, implicit in the idea of the indivisibility of matter is another consequence, namely that of the recurrence of creation. If matter does not possess in itself the cause of its own differentiations and combinations, then any conglomeration of atoms which defines a certain being must be purely accidental. Because these accidents are in a state of continual change, they require the intervention of a transcendent primary cause to create and sustain them. The conclusion is evident: matter and accident must be created *at every instant* The entire universe is maintained from instant to instant by the all-powerful divine Hand. In the Ash'arite conception of things, the universe is continually expanding, and only the divine Hand is able to preserve its unity, its cohesion and its duration, even though our senses and our reason are too feeble to perceive that this is so.

3. *Reason and faith*

1. Apart from the problem resolved by its atomic cosmology, Ash'arism was faced with another problem which presented itself, characteristically, as the problem of the relationship between reason and faith. Here again Ash'arism confirms its determination to avoid extremes. On the one hand, there were the Mu'tazilites, who desired to acknowledge only reason and the rational, and on the other there were the literalists, who did not wish even to hear these categories spoken of. If one accepts the Mu'tazilite position, and acknowledges human reason as the absolute arbiter in both temporal and spiritual matters, the simple believer may well ask: why is it necessary to agree to a religious Law? The Mu'tazilite will doubtless reply that religion is an ethical and social necessity for the masses, because not everyone is capable of leading a life in truth and goodness. Well and good. But when the self-aware individual reaches maturity, why should he continue any subscription to religion, when he judges himself able, through his personal experience, to attain to the truth and to act accordingly?

Both those who regard human reason as all in all, and those for whom it counts for nothing, end up by separating reason from faith. The Mu'tazilites banish religious faith because the self-aware individual

no longer needs it; at the opposite extreme, the literalists banish reason on the pretext that it is of no use in religious matters, where faith alone is necessary. Yet why, then, does the Quran encourage reasoning and speculation? Why does it invite us to exercise our intelligence on purely religious themes, such as divine existence, divine providence, revelation and so on?

Ash'arism attempted to steer a middle course between the two extremes, endeavouring to define the domain proper to the rational intelligence and that which belonged to faith. Even if it is true that the same spiritual reality may be grasped both by reason and by faith, nevertheless the mode of perception in each case operates under such different conditions that the one mode should not be confused with the other, nor substituted for it, nor be rejected in favour of the other.

2. There is something distressing in the struggle thus engaged in by Ash'arism, for it raises the question of whether it had sufficient means at its disposal to resolve it. If one compares it to the prophetic philosophy of Shiite gnosis described above (ch. II), the two situations are in powerful contrast. In confronting both Mu'tazilites and literalists simultaneously, Ash'arism in fact remains in their sphere. In this sphere it would be difficult to envisage the ascending perspectives of the *ta'wil* and to open a path leading from the *zahir* to the *batin*, the contrast is between the rational dialectic of the *kalam*, and what we have learned to know as *hikmat ilahlyah (theosophia), 'irfan* (mystical gnosis), *ma'rifah qalbiyah* (the heart's knowledge)—in short, that form of awareness in which all knowledge leads back to the act of knowing oneself. Reflection on the solution of al-Ash'ari to the dilemma of the created or uncreated Quran leaves the impression that his quest was arrested prematurely. But could it have been otherwise? An entire prophetology was lacking, together with a deeper understanding of the concepts of *time* and *event* on their different levels of meaning. But, as certain Shiite authors have already shown us, Ash'arite atomism and the denial of intermediary causes actually make it impossible for a prophetology to exist.

If Ash'arism has survived so many attacks and criticisms, we must accept that it reflects the awareness of Sunni Islam. And that is the direst symptom of a situation which makes one wonder whether philosophy was ever to be 'at home' there, or whether it would always remain out of place. Mu'tazilism is contemporary with the Imams of

Shiism (whose adherents had more than one argument with Mu'tazilite masters). Al-Ash'ari was born in the very year which saw the commencement of the 'lesser occultation' of the twelfth Imam (260/873). He died at Baghdad only a few years before al-Kulayni, the great Shiite theologian, who actually worked in Baghdad for twenty years. The names of the two masters could be taken as symbols of the very different conditions which the future held in store for philosophy, in Shiite and Sunni Islam respectively.

IV. Philosophy and the Natural Sciences

1. HERMETICISM

1. We saw above (I, 2) that the Sabians of Harran traced their descent back to Hermes and to Agathodaimon. Thabit'ibn Qurrah (d. 288/901), their most famous teacher, had written a book in Syriac on the 'Institutions of Hermes' and had himself translated it into Arabic. For the Manichaeans, Hermes was one of the five great prophets who preceded Mani. The person of Hermes passed from Manichaean prophetology into Islamic prophetology, in which he is identified with Idris and Enoch (Ukhnukh).

It is scarcely surprising that the first 'hermeticizing' Muslims were Shiite. On the one hand, Shiite prophetology (see above, n, A, 2) already in itself subsumed the prophetic category proper to Hermes. He is not a legislative prophet, charged with revealing a *shari'ah* to mankind. In prophetic hierohistory, his rank is that of a *nabi* who was sent to organize the life of the first city-settlements and to teach men the technical sciences. On the other hand, Shiite gnosiology also subsumed in itself the mode of knowledge that was common to the ordinary *nabis* prior to Islam (such as Hermes), to the Imams, and to the *awliya'* in general during the cycle of the *walayah* which succeeds the cycle of legislative prophecy. This is what we saw described as direct divine inspiration (see above, n, A, 5), superior even to the legislative mission. Hermetic philosophy does in fact call itself a *hikmah laduniyah*, an inspired wisdom, which is to say a prophetic philosophy.

In contrast to this, the Sunnis (according to the evidence of al-Shahra-Rtani) condemned the hermeticism of the Sabians as a religion incompatible with Islam, because it can dispense with the prophet (the prophet-legislator of a *shari'ah*, that is): the *ascent* of the spirit to Heaven, into which Hermes initiated his disciples, made it unnecessary to believe in the *descent* of an Angel who reveals the divine text to the prophet. This flat incompatibility ceases to exist when the

question is viewed in the context of Shiite prophetology and gnosiology, with far-reaching consequences. One can see how and why hermeticism, introduced through Shiism, was able to achieve recognition in Islam before Aristotle's syllogistics and metaphysics had made their appearance. In addition one can see more clearly the reasons for the Shiite attitude and its consequences for the future of philosophy in Islam, and why, on the Sunni side, there was indiscriminate condemnation of the Shiite attitude, as well as the Ismaili and hermeticist position, as fundamentally hostile to prophecy and destructive of the legalistic Islam of the *shari'ah.*

2. like many 'strong personalities' of the time, the Iranian philosopher al-Sarakhsi (d. 286/899), a pupil of the philosopher al-Kindi (see below, V, 1), was a Shiite, or was thought to be one. He had written a book, now lost, on the religion of the Sabians. His teacher al-Kindi had also read what Hermes had to say to his son {no doubt an implicit reference to the *Pimander)* concerning the mystery of divine transcendence, and he stated that a Muslim philosopher like himself could not have put it better, Unfortunately, the Sabians did not possess a 'Book' brought to them by a prophet-legislator, a Book which might have won them official recognition as *ahl al-kitab.* Little by little, they had to convert to Islam. Their last known leader, Hukaym ibn Isa ibn Marwan, died in 333/944. Their influence has nonetheless left ineradicable traces. Their conviction that syllogism was inadequate to distinguish the divine attributes is reminiscent of the reservations expressed by the Imam Ja'far with regard to dialectic (the science of the *kalam).* Something of their terminology, allied to that of Manichaeism, appears in the work of al-Shalmaghani (d. 322/934), the moving figure of a personal tragedy fitting for an ultra-Shiite. Something of it enters Sufism (al-Kharraz, d. 286/899; al-Hallaj, d. 309/922) through the intermediary of Dhu al-Nun al-Misri (d. 245/859), an Egyptian who was both alchemist and mystic. The neo-Platonists of Islam who effected the synthesis between philosophical speculation and mystical experience, such as al-Suhrawardi (d. 587/1191) and Ibn Sab'in (d. 669/1270), expressly claimed to be part of a chain of initiation *(isnad)* which goes back to Hermes. In the seventh/thirteenth century, Afdal al-Din al-Kashani, a Shiite Iranian philosopher, translated a hermetic treatise into Persian (see below). Hermes never ceases

to figure in prophetic hierohistory (*cf,* in Iran, al-Majlisi and Ashkivari in the seventeenth century).

3. In order to characterize hermetic thinking and all that came under its influence in Islam, we have to bear in mind, following Louis Massignon (see Bibliography), the following factors. There was the firm belief, in theology, that although the ineffable divinity is not susceptible to syllogism, Emanations proceed from it, and that it may be attained through prayer, by means of asceticism and invocation. There was the idea of cyclical time allied to a hermetic astrology. {This is the fundamental idea of time in Ismaili Shiism; for the Nusayris, Hermes is the theophany of the second 'dome'; for the Druze, Ukhnukh is identified with Eve as the second Emanation, the Soul of the world.) 'There is a synthetic physics which, far from opposing the sublunary world to the empyrean Heaven {and the four corruptible Elements to the quintessence), affirms the unity of the universe.' This gives rise to the principle and the science of *correspondences,* based on the *sympathy* which exists between all things. There is the use of what L. Massignon calls the 'anomalistic causal series', that is to say, the tendency to consider not the general law but the individual case, even when it is abnormal. It is this which distinguishes hermeticism from the logical tendencies of Aristotelianism, and allies it to the empirical and concrete dialectic of the Stoic schools. This Stoic or Stoicizing influence may be perceived not only in relation to the school of Arabic grammarians at Kufah (see below, IV, 5), but also in relation to a type of Shiite science which is devoted to the consideration of the causes of what is individual (as in Ibn Babuyah). We can detect the same affinity at the highest point of Twelver Shiite thought, in the metaphysics of *existing* which Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi opposes to the metaphysics of essences.

4. It is impossible here to list the titles of the works which figure in the Islamic hermetic tradition: treatises attributed to Hermes, to his followers (Ostanes, Zosimus and so on), translations (the *Book of Krates,* the *Book of the Beloved),* the works of Ibn Wahshiyah or those attributed to him, among others the famous *Nabataan Agriculture,* which was actually written by a Shiite of viziral family, Abu Talib Ahmad ibn al-Zayyat, who died around 340/951. Nevertheless, special mention must be made of two great Arabic hermetic works: (a)

The *Book of the Secret of Creation and the Workings of Nature (Sirr al-khaliqah),* written in the time of the caliph Ma'mun (d. 218/833) by an anonymous Muslim, who put it in the name of Apollonius of Tyana. This treatise ends with the famous 'Emerald Tablet', *Tabula smaragdina.* (It should be compared to the *Book of Treasures,* an encyclopaedia of natural sciences, written at the same period by Job of Edessa, a Nestorian physician at the 'Abbasid court), (b) The *Aim of the Sage, (Ghayyat al-Hakim),* wrongly attributed to Maslamah al-Majriti, who died in 398/1007. This treatise contains, apart from valuable information about the astral liturgies of the Sabians, an entire teaching on 'Perfect Nature' attributed to Socrates.

5. The theme of 'Perfect Nature' *(al-tiba' al-tamm)* is one of the most fascinating in this entire body of literature. Perfect Nature is the 'spiritual entity' *(ruhaniyah),* the 'Angel of the philosopher', his personal guide who initiates him personally into wisdom. It is, in short, another name for Daena, the celestial *alter ego,* the figure of light in the likeness of the soul which, in Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, appears to the elect at the moment of their *exitus.* Hermes' vision of his Perfect Nature was commentated by al-Suhrawardi and after him by the entire Ishraqi school {see below, VI), down to Mulla Sadra and his pupils' pupils. As we shall see {below, V, 6), it is by way of the theme of Perfect Nature that Abu al-Barakat al-Baghdadi, proceeding in a highly individual fashion, elucidates the implications of Avicenna's doctrine of the Active Intelligence. We can find semblances of 'Perfect Nature' under other names. It is in quest of her that the pilgrim goes in the mystical Persian epics of 'Attar. She is to be found in the school of Najm al-Din al-Kubra, where she is known as the 'Witness in Heaven', the 'invisible guide'. She is also the daimon of Socrates and Plotinus' personal daimon. There is no doubt that this line of Islamic sages is indebted to hermeticism for its awareness of the 'celestial I', the 'I in the second person', which is the goal of the sage's inner pilgnmage, that is to say of his personal realization.

2. JABIR IBN HAYYAN AND ALCHEMY

1. The vast body of writings attributed to Jabir ibn Hayyan is likewise hermetic, by reason of certain of its sources. We can only refer in passing here to the monumental work which the late Paul Kraus devoted

to it, and which will long serve as the basis for Jabirian studies. It is a formidable task to decide on the authorship of the Jabirian *corpus.* Berthelot, who was concerned above all with the Latin Jabir *(Geber)*—and documents were then inaccessible—arrived at summary and baseless negations. Holmyard, on the other hand, had accumulated a mass of relevant documents in favour of the tradition: Jabir *had* lived in the second/eighth century, he *had* been the pupil of the sixth Imam, Ja'far, and he *was* the author of the enormous collection of around three thousand treatises attributed to him {something which is not totally unthinkable if one compares it with the *oeuvre* of an Ibn al-Arabi or an al-Majlisi). Ruska tried to find a middle way, ruling out the Imam's influence {an exclusion which is in somewhat arbitrary defiance of an enduring Shiite tradition), but admitting a tradition whose centres were in Iran. Paul Kraus, after careful and critical research, concluded that there had been a number of authors, and that several collections had accrued around a primary central work in an order which can be approximately reconstructed. He dated the start of this process to around the third or fourth/ ninth or tenth century, not to the second/eighth.

We should, however, point out that notwithstanding the contrast between the so-called 'technical' collections and the others, all of them are organically connected and possess an inspiration which is constant. If it is true that one collection in the *corpus* refers to *The Secret of the Creation* attributed to Apollonius of Tyana {see above, IV, 1) but actually dating from the third/ninth century, none the less we have no assurance whatsoever that the latter created its own vocabulary and subject-matter, and did not receive them from a predecessor. The anti- Jabirian testimony of the philosopher Muhammad Abu Sulayman al-Mantiqial-Sijistani{d. *ca.* 371/981) is self-contradictory. Frankly, we believe that in this sphere, in which a large number of the books of the period are lost, it is more fruitful to direct one's attention to what explains and is explained by a tradition, than to engage in a historical hypercriticism which is based on extremely shaky foundations. If we wish neither to belittle nor systematically to ignore everything that we are told concerning the Shiite Imams {and here the backwardness of Shiite studies makes itself particularly felt), and if we recall that Ismailism first came into being among the followers of the Imam Isma'il, son of the Imam Ja'far, then the relationship of

Jabir to Ismailism and to the Imam appears in its true light. If the perfectly coherent biography, derived later from the *corpus* by the alchemist Aydamur al-Jildaki, states that there was an alchemist called Jabir ibn Hayyan, a follower of the sixth Imam and an initiate of the eighth Imam, al-Rida, and that ultimately he died at Tus in Khurasan, in the year 200/815, there is absolutely no good reason to contest it. There would then not even be any contradiction in admitting that certain of the collections in the *corpus* postulate more than one author, for we will perceive that the concept of Jabir, the figure of him as a person, assumes ultimately a significance which goes beyond the limits of a chronologically fixed and immobilized *situs.*

2. The researches of Paul Kraus went some way towards showing that Jabir's theory of the Balance *(mizan)* 'represented the most rigorous attempt in the Middle Ages to found a quantitative system for the natural sciences'. The justness of this statement would have appeared in its full light if the tragic death of Paul Kraus had not prevented him from concluding his work. There remained to be completed the task of showing the link between Jabir's alchemy and the religious philosophy of Ismailism. Jabirian 'quantitative' science is not merely a chapter in the early history of science, as the word 'science' is understood in our day, but an entire *Weltanschauung.* The science of the Balance aims at encompassing all the fundamental concepts of human knowledge. It applies not only to the three kingdoms of the 'sublunary world', but also to the movements of the stars and to the hypostases of the spiritual world. As the 'Book of the Fifty' puts it, there are Balances to measure 'the Intelligence, the Soul of the world, Nature, Forms, the Spheres, the stars, the four natural Qualities, the animal, the vegetable, the mineral, and finally the Balance of letters, which is the most perfect of all.' There is a danger, therefore, that the term 'quantitative', applied to Jabirian science, may give rise to ambiguity or misapprehension.

The purpose of the 'science of the Balance' is the discover in each body the relationship which exists between the manifest and the hidden *(zahir* and *batin,* exoteric and esoteric). As we said, the alchemical operation can thus be considered the example *par excellence* of *ta'wil* or spiritual exegesis: occulting the visible and causing what is occulted to become visible. As the 'Book of the Arena of the Intelligence' *(Kitab maydan al-'aql)* explains at length, to measure the properties of an

object {heat, cold, moisture, dryness) is to measure the quantities to which the Soul of the world has adapted itself—to measure, that is, the intensity of the Soul's desire in its descent into matter: it is from the desire for the Elements aroused in the Soul that the originative principle of the Balances *(mawazin)* is derived. One could therefore say that the transmutation of the Soul when it returns to itself will condition the transmutation of bodies, the Soul being the very place where this transmutation occurs. The alchemical operation is thus seen to be a psycho-spiritual *operation par excellence*— not that the alchemical texts are in any way an 'allegory of the Soul', but because the stages of the operation, actually performed on actual matter, *symbolize with* the stages of the Soul's return to itself.

The incredibly complex measurements and the sometimes colossal figures, so minutely established by Jabir, have no meaning for today's laboratories. It is hard to see the science of the Balance, whose principle and purpose is to measure the desire of the Soul of the world incorporate in every substance, as anticipating modern quantitative science. On the other hand, it could be seen as anticipating the 'energizing of the soul' which is nowadays the object of so much research. Jabir's Balance was thus the only 'algebra' capable of recording the degree of 'spiritual energy' in the Soul incorporate in the Properties, then freeing itself from them through the ministry of the alchemist who, in setting the Properties free, liberates his own soul.

3. We have just seen that Jabir considered the 'Balance of letters' as the most perfect of all {see below, IV, 5). The Islamic gnostics developed a theory which existed in ancient gnosis, according to which the letters of the alphabet, being the ground-work of Creation, represent the materialization of the divine Word *(cf.* Mark the Gnostic; *cf.* also below, the Shiite gnostic Mughirah). The Imam Ja'far is unanimously regarded as the originator of the 'science of letters'. The Sunni mystics themselves borrowed it from the Shiites after the second half of the third/ninth century. Ibn al-'Arabi and his school made extensive use of it. On the Ismaili side, speculation on the divine Name corresponds to the speculation in Jewish gnosis on the tetragrammaton.

Jabir devotes particular attention to this 'Balance of letters' in his treatise entitled the 'Book of the Glorious One' *(Kitab al-Majid,* see bibliography)—a treatise which, abstruse as it is, is nevertheless the

best illustration of the link between his alchemical doctrine and Ismaili gnosis, and which may even permit us to glimpse the secret of his person. The treatise provides a lengthy analysis of the value and meaning of the three symbolical letters *'ayn,* symbolizing the Imam, the Silent One, *samit,* 'Ali; *mim,* symbolizing the Prophet, *natiq,* the annunciator of the *shari'ah,* Muhammad; *sin,* calling to mind Salman, the *hujjah.* It has already been said (p. 101) that according to how one ranks these letters in order of precedence, one obtains the symbolic order typifying Twelver Shiism and Fatimid Ismailism *{mim, 'ayn, sin),* or else proto-Ismailism (such as that of the *Seven Combats of Salman* in the treatise *Umm al-Kitab)* and the Ismailism of Alamut (*'ayn, sin, mim).* In the case of the latter, Salman, the *hujjah,* takes precedence over the *mim.* Jabir justifies this order of precedence by a rigorous application of the value disclosed by the Balance of the three letters in question.

Who is the *sin,* the Glorious One? At no time does Jabir say that he is the awaited Imam, the Elixir *{al-iksir)* who emanates from the divine Spirit and will transfigure the city here below (an idea that corresponds to the eschatology of all Shiism, which Western interpreters have too often tended to 'politicize'). The *sin* is the Stranger, the Expatriate *(gharib),* the *yatim* (the orphan, the solitary one, the peerless), he who through his own efforts has found the way and has been *adopted* by the Imam; he who shows the pure light of the *'ayn* (the Imam) to all who like himself are strangers—the pure Light which abolishes the Law that 'gehennas' bodies and souls, the Light handed down from Seth, Adam's son, to Christ, and from Christ to Muhammad in the person of Salman. The 'Book of the Glorious One' says that to understand it—to understand, that is, the book itself—and thereby to understand the order of the entire *corpus,* is to be *like Jabir* himself. Elsewhere, using the symbol of the Hi*myarite* language (southern Arabic) and of a mysterious shaykh who taught it to him, he says to his reader: 'When you read the Book of Morphology, you will become aware of the precedence of this shaykh, and also of *your own precedence,* O reader. God knows that *you are he.'* Jabir the person is neither myth nor legend, but he is more than his historical person. The Glorious One is the archetype; even if several writers were responsible for the *corpus,* each of them had authentically to reassume the *geste* of the archetype in the name of Jabir.

This *geste* is the *geste* of alchemy, though we cannot follow its progress here save through a few names: Mu'ayyad al-Din Husayn al-Tughra'i, the famous poet and alchemical writer of Isfahan, executed in 515/1121; Muhyi al-Din Ahmad al-Buni (d. 622/1225) who had studied two hundred of Jabir's works; the Egyptian amir Aydamur al-Jildaki (d. 743/1342 or 762/1360), who makes frequent reference to Jabir. One of his many works, the 'Book of Evidence concerning the Secrets of the Balance', comprises four enormous volumes. This work pays particular attention to the spiritual transmutation which 'symbolizes with' the alchemical operation. The final chapter of the book *Nata'ij al-Fikar,* whose title is the 'Priest's Dream', celebrates the union of Hermes with his Perfect Nature. In fifteenth-century Iran, a Sufi master at Kirman, Shah Ni'mat Allah al-Wali, himself annotated his own copy of a book by al-Jildaki *{Nihayat al-talab).* At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the masters of the Iranian Sufi renaissance, Nur 'All-Shah and Muzaffar 'Ali-Shah, gave expression in their turn, using alchemical annotations, to the stages of the mystical union. Finally, in the Shaykhi school, alchemical descriptions are linked to the theosophical doctrine of the 'body of resurrection'.

3. THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF THE KHWAN AL-SAFA'

1. It has become traditional to translate the name by which this society of thinkers based in Basrah calls itself as 'the Brothers of Purity and Lovers of Fidelity'. (Objection has been made to the term 'purity', but this is what the word actually means; it does not signify 'chastity', but purity as opposed to *kadurah,* impurity or opacity. When one reads their text, one realizes that they are 'the Brothers of the pure heart and the Faithful in every trial'.) In their encyclopaedia, they profess themselves to be a confraternity whose members do not reveal their names. It is agreed that the state of the text, as it has come down to us, dates from the fourth/tenth century. In addition, certain philosophers and historians (al-Tawhidi, al-Qifti, al-Shahrazuri) have given us the names of some of those who collaborated in the work: Abu Sulayman al-Busti, al-Muqaddasi, 'Ali ibn Harun al-Zanjani, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Nahrajuri (or Mihrajani), and al-'Awfi.

We are not concerned simply with a group of Shiite sympathizers, but with a definite society of Ismaili thought, although the discreet

nature of the writing reveals this only to 'him who knows'. It is true that the work was a work of propaganda, but the word 'popular' would be out of place here, for its content is not popular. If copies of the book were cautiously distributed at the time in mosques, this is because, according to Ismaili teaching, one should try to awaken whoever is capable of being awoken to the knowledge that there is something superior to the literal legalistic religion, or *shari'ah,* this latter being an effective medicine only for souls that are weak and ill. One should try to guide whoever is called to it to the pure gnostic spiritual religion. It would likewise be inaccurate here to speak, as we tend to, of a 'reconciliation' between religion and philosophy. In esotericism there are *levels of meaning* which correspond to the respective aptitudes of souls. The ideal organization of the Brothers was based precisely on this. It was, to be sure, an enterprise of spiritual liberation—which is not to say of rationalism or agnosticism, for our thinkers would not consider these a 'liberation'. Their concern was to guide the adept to a life in the divine likeness by means of an initiatic philosophy which is in the tradition of prophetic philosophy.

2. The Encyclopaedia of the Brothers of Basrah thus aspires to encompass all knowledge and to give meaning to the struggles of the human race. It is made up of fifty-one treatises. (Current editions include a fifty-second treatise which appears to have been added after the original compilation. The real fifty-second treatise is described below.) The treatises are grouped in four lengthy sections. Fourteen are concerned with propaedeutics, mathematics and logic, seventeen with natural philosophy, including psychology, ten with metaphysics, and ten (eleven counting the additional treatise) with mysticism and astrological matters.

Certain notions deriving from Islamic sources are grafted onto the Greek ideas concerning the properties of each number. It is no accident that the encyclopaedia, in which Pythagorean arithmology plays a significant role, contains fifty-one treatises, and that seventeen of these (17 x 3 = 51) should be concerned with physics. (The number 17 is important in Jewish gnosis as well. Furthermore, 17 is the number of persons who, according to the Shiite gnostic Mughirah, will be resurrected on the day of the coming of the Imam-Mahdi; each of these 17 persons will be given one of the 17 letters which make up the supreme Name of God. 51 mystical **elect,** who drink of **the** sea of

the *'ayn-mfm-sin,* keep watch at the gates of the Sabian city of Harran, the Oriental centre of the Pythagorean school.)

The Brothers evince a tendency, already pronounced in Jabir ibn Hayyan, to elevate the principle of the Balance to the rank of a metaphysical principle. Jabir had already said that every philosophy and every science is a Balance; consequently the Balance (the contemplation of number-ideas) is in a class superior to that of philosophy and all that it comprises. Similarly, in the case of the Brothers of Basrah, each discipline and technique has its own balances *{mawazin),* and the 'supreme Balance' is the Balance mentioned in the Quran (21:47, on the Day of Resurrection). The term *Balance* here assumes its specifically Shiite and Ismaili overtones. What is at issue is the 'right Balance' (Quran 17:35 and 26:182)—that equilibrium and justice connoted by the word *'adl,* with all its philosophical and religious implications—which will be the work of the Imam of the Resurrection (the fidelity of the Ikh*wan* having reference to their anticipation of this Imam).

3. The Brothers speak of the ideal constitution of their Order. It contains four grades, corresponding to the spiritual aptitudes which develop with increasing age (the idea of the pilgrimage to Mecca is transformed into a symbol of the pilgrimage of life), (a) Young people aged from fifteen to thirty, trained according to the natural law. (b) Men aged from thirty to forty, who are instructed in profane wisdom and in the analogical knowledge of things, (c) Only after the age of forty is the initiate capable of being initiated into the spiritual reality hidden beneath **the** exoteric aspect of the *shari'ah.* At this stage, his mode of knowledge is that of the prophets *{cf.* above, n, A, 5). (d) After the age of fifty, he is in a position to perceive this esoteric spiritual reality in all things. His mode of knowledge is now that of the angels, and comprehends both the letter of the *Liber mundi and* that of the revealed Book. The organization of the hierarchy is founded solely on inner aptitude and spiritual rank, in a context within which 'the ritual and the calendar of the philosophers' are explained. This is a combination typical of Sabian and Ismaili ideas. We learn that the Brothers, like their predecessors, were subjected to the vicissitudes and persecutions which are directed against men of God during a 'cycle of occultation' *(dawr al-satr).*

4. Moreover, one can no longer entertain any doubt about the Brothers' links with Ismailism if one reads the great 'Recapitulatory Treatise' *(al-Risalat al-jami'ah)* which is the true fifty-second treatise of the Encyclopaedia. This Treatise discloses the background to the questions with which the Encyclopaedia is concerned; it begins with a history of Adam {the esoteric meaning of his departure from Paradise) which is exactly the same as the one we summarized above (p.85). Uniform Ismaili tradition attributes this treatise to the second of the three 'secret Imams' (or *Imam mastur,* clandestine Imams), who came between Muhammad ibn Isma'il (son of the Imam Isma'il who gave his name to the Ismailis), and 'Ubayd Allah, who founded the Fatimid dynasty (b. 260/874. *Cf.* above, p.76: as we know, it was after the seventh Imam that Shiism was split into the Twelver and Ismaili branches. We must remember not to confuse the 'clandestinity' in which these intermediary Imams lived with the notion of the *ghaybah,* the occultation of the twelfth Imam in Imamism). The Imam Ahmad, great-grandson of the Imam Isma'il, came of age at the end of the second /eighth century-beginning of the third/ninth century. The Ismaili tradition also regards him as the author (or director) of the Encyclopaedia of the Ik*hwan*. In order to resolve the chronological difficulty, we could recognize, with W. Ivanow, that the nucleus of the work which through successive amplifications was to become the encyclopaedia of the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'* was in existence from the time of the Imam.

The orthodox Sunni attitude towards the Brothers and their encyclopaedia can be deduced from the fact that in 555/1160 the caliph al-Mustanjid ordered the burning of all copies of the encyclopaedia to be found in public and private libraries (together with the works of Avicenna!). Nevertheless, the work survived, and was translated into Persian and Turkish. It has exercised an enormous influence on all the thinkers and mystics of Islam.

4. RHAZES (AL-RAZI), PHYSICIAN AND PHILOSOPHER

1. Muhammad ibn Zakariya' al-Razi, powerful Iranian personality, famous physician, and highly individual philosopher, was born around 250/864 at Rayy (about twelve kilometres south of present-day Tehran). He travelled extensively: we know that he was head of the hospital at Rayy and held the same post in Baghdad. He died at Rayy

in 313/925 or 320/932. Both as a reminder of his origin (Rayy is the Ragha of the Avesta and the Raghes, or Rhages, of the Greeks), and in order to distinguish him from many other Razi's (natives of Rayy), we will call him here by the name *Rhazes*, derived from the medieval Latin translations of his medical works—the name by which he was known throughout the West during the Middle Ages. For a long time only his scientific works were known, and they are concerned mainly with medicine and alchemy. His philosophical work (he passed for a Pythagorean) was long thought to be completely lost. In fact, it is owing to our increased acquaintance with Ismaili works that Paul Kraus was able to undertake its reconstruction (eleven extracts from the works of Rhazes, collected by P. Kraus in one volume, Cairo, 1939).

2. It is indeed remarkable that the Ismaili writers, starting with his contemporary and fellow-national Abu Hatim al-Razi, should all have waged apolemic against him. There were also the posthumous critiques by Muhammad ibn Surkh al-Nisahari (in his commentary on the *qasidah* by his teacher Abu al-Haytham al-Jurjani), by Hamid al-Din al-Kirmanl, and by Nasir-i Khusraw. These have provided us with long and valuable quotations from works which are otherwise lost. One might have thought, *a priori,* that these highly cultured Iranians had every reason to be in agreement with each other, seeing that they possessed a common enemy in the scholastics and the literalists of 'orthodox' Islam, as well as in all the pietists opposed to philosophical research. Nevertheless, they do not make common cause, and all we can say is that the antagonists are worthy of each other. In confronting the Ismailis, Rhazes confronts neither pious literalists nor fanatical antagonists of philosophy. Far from it: the Ismailis were men who themselves upheld the rights of philosophical thought with all the ardour and spirit of, say, Nasir-i Khusraw.

In seeking the reasons for this opposition, we may discern a first symptom of it in the conception of alchemy developed by Rhazes. Whether or not he knew Jabir, his conception is certainly different. Hearing in mind the connection of Jabirian alchemy with Ismaili gnosis, we may guess that Rhazes' ignorance of the 'science of the Balance' implies ignorance of, if not hostility towards, the fundamental principle of *ta'wil*, one of whose main applications was, as we saw, the alchemical operation. This may explain Rhazes' general tendency to reject esoteric

and symbolic explanations of natural phenomena. Two opposing world views confront one another. But so true is it that a writer can never exhaust the meaning of his own work that attempts were made (for example, by pseudo-Majriti in his book *Rutbat al-hakim)* to bring Jabir's alchemy into conjunction with that of Rhazes.

3. The Ismailis attacked the views held by Rhazes on the following principal themes: Time, Nature, the Soul, and Prophecy. The first objective of their attack was the most characteristic thesis of Rhazes' philosophy, namely the affirmation of five eternal Principles: the Demiurge, the universal Soul, the *Materia prima,* Space, and Time. Abu Hatim al-Razi, in one of his books, has given us the draft of a discussion which was intended to clear up one first point: is there not a contradiction in making Time an eternal principle? The great interest of this discussion is that it allows us to understand the distinction made by Rhazes between a *time measured* by the movement of the Heavens, and an *unmeasured time*, independent of heaven and even of the Soul, for it relates to a level of the universe which is above the Soul. (Nasir-i Khusraw also said: time is eternity measured by the motions of the Heavens; eternity is time which is unmeasured, and therefore without beginning or end.)

The discussion is not concluded, because the two speakers are not talking about the same time. The distinction made by Rhazes between *absolute time* and *limited* time corresponds, in the terminology of the neo-Platonist Proclus, to the distinction between *separated* and *non-separated* time, and it echoes the differentiation made in the Zervanite cosmology of ancient Iran between 'the time without a shore' and 'the time of long dominion'. In connection with this, al-Biruni tells us that Rhazes was descended from a philosopher of ancient Iran, al-Iranshahri, who belonged to the third/ninth century and of whose work only a few quotations remain. He too was a 'powerful personality' since, according to al-Biruni, he wished to reject all the existing religions in order to create a personal one for himself. Nasir-i Khusraw, too, sings his praises in the most vivid terms.

4. With respect to the philosophy of Nature, or more accurately to the science traditionally known as 'the science of the natural properties of things', Rhazes states in the introduction to his book that the physician-philosophers have said excellent things: 'Nevertheless, they

have said nothing about the natural property itself; they have simply concluded that it exists. No one has written about the causal agency, or set forth the reason, the wherefore. This is because the cause is not an object that can be known.' This admission of impotence draws a heated reaction from the Ismaili theosopher Muhammad ibn Surkh al-Nisahari: 'One can have confidence in Rhazes as far as medicine is concerned', he writes, 'but beyond that it is impossible to go along with him'. The view that he holds in opposition to Rhazes coheres with that of Nasir-i Khusraw, and expresses the entire Ismaili theosophy of Nature. Nature is born in Matter through a contemplation which the Soul projects into this Mattter, just as the Soul comes to be through a contemplation of the Intelligence directed upon itself. In this sense the Soul is the child of the Intelligence, and in the same way Nature is the child of the Soul, the Soul's pupil and disciple. This is why it is able to act, to produce acts which are imitations of the acts of the Soul; consequently it can be a principle of movement (which Rhazes denied). Nature is the *speculum Animae.* Hence natural beauty is itself spiritual beauty, and the science of the natural properties of things can be practised as a science of the Soul. We come round again in this way to the science of Jabir, and Rhazes is left far behind.

5. What is fundamental here, then, is two different conceptions of the Soul and of the Soul's gnostic history. Rhazes' pessimism differs from Ismaili pessimism. He represented the drama of the Soul in a symbolic narrative which established his reputation as a crypto-Manichaean, and which undeniably possesses gnostic overtones. The Soul ardently desired to penetrate this world, without foreseeing that she would agitate Matter with tumultuous and disordered motion and would be frustrated in her aim. In this way the Soul of the world became the miserable prisoner of this world. Then out of the substance of his own divinity the Creator sent the Intelligence (*'aql,* the *nous)* to awaken the soul from her lethargy and show her that this world is not her homeland. Hence the mission of the philosophers and the deliverance of souls through philosophy, for it is by means of philosophy that the Soul learns to know her own world.

To understand why the Ismailis reacted in a frequently violent manner to Rhazes' gnosis, we must bear in mind their own gnosis (see above, II, B), which 'recounts' the victory over himself achieved by the third Angel of the Pleroma, the Angel of humanity, who because of his

mistake became the tenth Angel and the demiurge of this physical world in order to help his followers gain their liberty. Similarly, Nasir-i Khusraw's reply to Rhazes is that the second hypostasis of the Pleroma, the Soul, did not 'fall' into Nature in order to produce the Forms in it. All she needed to do was to project her contemplation into this Nature, and the *active physis was* made manifest in it. It is the individual, partial souls who were the victims of this fall, souls who were, to be sure, *members* of the Soul's Pleroma, but different from the Soul itself. Moreover, does not Aristotle, at the end of his *Liber de Pomo,* commit his soul to her 'as to the lord of the souls of philosophers'? How can the *Anima mundi* be reduced to the collectivity of the partial souls? For the Ismaili, Nature is the *speculum Animae.* The Soul has need of Nature as of her own organ, so that she may know herself and attain to herself. A being who is in a position to know and attain to himself postulates a duality in his being. But this duality is not Evil. Nature is not Evil; it is the instrument which renders it possible to lessen an Evil which made its appearance prior to Nature, in pre-eternity (the difference between the gnosis of the Ismailis and that of Rhazes being quite unambiguous). This law of being is that which governs the rhythm of the cycles and periods of the world; it is the secret of eschatology, and hence the secret of the periods of prophetology.

6. We have struck the basic reason for the antagonism with which we are concerned: the anti-prophetism of Rhazes. He affirms that the mission of the philosophers is to awaken the souls who are plunged in lethargy. The Ismailis reply that the awakening of these souls is beyond the power of philosophers. It requires the word of the prophets. Was not the clan of the philosophers mostly ignored by the masses and ridiculed by the authorities? According the Rhazes, the souls who have not been redeemed by philosophy wander after their death up and down the world; they are the demons who seduce men through pride and make them occasionally into prophets. Rhazes expressed himself with extraordinary violence on the subject of the 'demonic' imposture of the prophets (and possibly influenced thereby the famous pamphlet *On the Three Impostors,* so favoured by Western rationalists since the time of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen). But if this is so, asks the Ismaili, why was each Prophet plagued, tormented and persecuted by the brood of Iblis, by the demons with human faces against whom all the prophets waged war?

Rhazes is the ardent proclaimer of an irreducible 'egalitarianism'. All men are equal; it is unthinkable that God should have singled out a few of them in order to bestow on them the prophetic mission. This mission, therefore, can only result in disaster: the wars and the slaughter unleashed in the name of dogmas and vain beliefs. The Ismailis reply that the whole point is actually to guide men beyond the letter of dogma. If men were capable of accepting and understanding the esoteric spiritual exegesis {*ta'wil),* they would see that the religions each stand on their own level, without conflicting. In any case, does not Rhazes himself, egalitarian though he is, claim to be a teacher and a guide? Does he not claim to have discovered what his predecessors did not know? And do not the philosophers, too, disagree amongst themselves? Have they never committed either a falsehood or a mistake? Rhazes' reply is superb: 'It is not a question of falsehood or of error. Each of them has made an attempt, and this very attempt, has set him on the road to truth.' (Lessing was to say later that the quest for truth is more precious than truth.)

The intense interest of this *disputatio* lies in the fact that the opposition in question is not a banal opposition between rationalism, philosophy and theology in the current or confessional sense of the word. It is a far more radical opposition between an esoteric and initiatic religious spirit, and a will which is hostile to all that such a spirit implies. The egalitarian fury of Rhazes is all the more stubborn in that it rebounds on himself, for he is supremely aware of his own superiority. The antagonists confronting him are not theologians or doctors of the Law; they are not even pious philosophers who have made their peace with the latter. They are men with an initiatic sense, aware that spiritual truth can be wholly understood and assumed only by an elite which alone has the requisite capacity. The Ismaili emissary (the *da'i)* does not preach in the public square; he chooses and summons men individually. There are in existence spiritual truths which impel an elite towards its *resurrections (qiyamat).* The majority of men, for reasons which go beyond their condition in the present world, are capable of grasping only the verbal utterance of these truths, and find in them a pretext for *insurrections* which give rise to tyrannies far worse than all the *shari'ahs* of all the Prophets.

At the same time, this *disputatio* also manifests the whole consciousness of the Islam that we call 'esoteric' as the latter was posited at

the beginning of this study, embracing as it does the 'prophetic philosophy' which it alone was able to develop through Shiism. The opposition between Rhazes and the Ismailis is one of the great moments in Islamic thought.

5. THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

1. Within the totality of Islamic thought, we come now to an area both original and fascinating, where the main lines of thought that we have been studying manifest themselves in pragmatic terms. Before the time of the Hijrah, Syrians and Persians had studied Aristotle's hermeneutics *(peri hermeneias)*, revised by the Stoics and the neo-Platonists. The friendship of Ibn al-Muqaffa', the famous convert from Mazdeism, for the grammarian Khalil ibn Ahmed (d. 791 CE), had given the latter access to everything that existed in Pahlavi (Middle Iranian) relating to grammar and logic. However, the structure of the Semitic languages provided philosophical meditation with new and inexhaustible themes. Arabic tradition attributes the science of grammar to the first Imam of Shiism, 'All ibn Abi Talib. In fact the work of Sibuyah (which the Arabs vocalize as Sibawayh), a pupil of Khalil, provides a grammatical system which is whole and complete and which has been compared to Avicenna's Canon for medicine. It is remarkable that an Iranian should have been responsible for this monumental work on Arabic grammar. {Sibuyah, who died in 169/786, has his memorial at Shiraz in Fars, that is to say in Persia.)

The first developments are obscure. What is important for the history of philosophy is to know how the work of the schools of Basrah and Kufah would develop on this basis throughout the third/ninth century. In the antagonism between these schools, there are actually two philosophies, two world views, in profound opposition to each other.

2. For the school of Basrah, language is a mirror which faithfully reflects phenomena, objects and concepts. The same laws must therefore be observed with regard to language as with regard to thought, nature and life. Hence it is important that each sound, each word and each phrase should be strictly grounded with respect to the variety of their forms and of the positions that they occupy. The main task, and the most difficult, for the school of grammarians at Basrah was to show the reciprocal relationship between language and the intellect. They

had to make the whole language conform to rational and logical categories, demonstrate its rules, and prove that all departures and lapses from it were only apparent and had a rational motive. Without separating morphology from syntax, the Arabic grammarians subjected all language, as well as nature, logic and society, to laws which were universally valid. In all cases, the same laws were in operation.

Needless to say, the living, spoken language, with its plentiful diversity, defies this universal teleology and is guilty of discrepancies. For this reason, the reconstruction of a grammatical schema was a task of great complexity: one had to take into account the irregularity of things. First and foremost, one had to distinguish the fundamental forms (paradigm, schema, *asl).* The grammarians of Basrah considered themselves entitled to stick to these forms and to reject all those which could not be justified by a rational explanation. Even if an exception is made in the case of certain forms, one still has no right to create by analogy other forms based on these isolated deviations.

3. In direct contrast to this remarkable strictness of approach, the school of Kufah was to develop a science of language of a type which conformed to the type of Shiite science analysed above (see above, IV, 1), demonstrating a marked taste for 'anomalistic' series. At that time, moreover, Kufah was the place *par excellence* where the Shiite influence was making itself felt. For the school of Kufah, tradition, with all its richness and its abundant diversity, was the first and principal source of grammar. It too accepted the law of analogy, but on condition that this did not require the sacrifice of forms sanctioned by tradition. On this account it has been said that, compared to the rigid system of the school of Basrah, the Kufah grammarians did not possess a system at all. What they had was rather a sum of particular decisions each taken with regard to a particular case, because each case is specific. At the same time, they had a horror of general laws and uniform motivations, and a leaning towards a diversity which warranted the individual, the exceptional, the unique form. Because they, too, were concerned with establishing the paradigms and the primary schemas, they multiplied these indefinitely. The grammarians of Basrah rejected all forms whose anomaly was not susceptible to rational justification. The grammarians of Kufah had no need to make such a choice in the tradition which they accepted as being the source of grammar. All forms encountered in the ancient pre-Islamic Arabic language and in litera-

ture, by the simple fact that they attest their own existence, could be regarded as well-grounded and as possessing a normative value. Each exception becomes an asl or, rather, the notion itself of exception is rendered meaningless.

Gotthold Weil, whose apposite observations we have just summarized, suggested that one might compare the opposition between the schools of Basrah and Kufah with the opposition between the schools of Alexandria and Pergamo, the conflict between the 'analogists' and the 'anomalists'. Admittedly this parallelism applies only to attitudes of mind, for the linguistic material is fundamentally different in each case. Moreover, the conflict between the Greek grammarians was a matter that concerned only scholars. In Islam, there was something far more serious at stake in the struggle, for not only did it affect legal and canonical decisions, but on it might depend the interpretation of a passage of the Quran or of a religious tradition. We have just noted the relationship between the spirit of the Kufah school and a certain type of Shiite science; and we should also note, as we have already done, its affinity with a type of Stoic science as 'the hermeneutic of the individual'. The fact that it was the spirit of the Basrah school which finally prevailed is symptomatic of something that goes far beyond the simple domain of mere linguistic philosophy.

4. It would, moreover, be inadequate to study the philosophy of language in the Islam of that time only as it is manifested in these two schools. Jabir's 'Balance of letters', the principle of which we described above (IV, 2), represents, under a different aspect and through the influence that it exerted, an essential element of this linguistic philosophy. This different aspect is that through which Jabir's theory demonstrates its affiliation to the gnostic tradition of Islam, which is itself an offshoot both of ancient gnosis and of the neo-Pythagorean tradition. We have already observed how closely related the theory of the Shiite gnostic Mughirah is to that of Mark the Gnostic (the body of *Aletheia* made up of the letters of the alphabet). In the old Persian treatise *Umm al-Kitab* (see above, p. 75), the figures and the order of the letters indicate the hierarchy of the celestial beings and of the Shiite Imams. (The same significance was attributed to the enigmatic letters which appear as the key signature at the beginning of certain Surahs in the Quran.) Also, this entire tradition regards the Imam Ja'far as the initiator of the science of letters, or *jafr.* Much later, al-Buni

(d. 622/1225) made the following observations: 'Know that the secrets of God and the objects of his knowledge, the subtle realities and the dense realities, the things above and the things below, fall into two categories: there are numbers, and there are letters. The secrets of the letters lie in the numbers, and the epiphanies of the numbers are in the letters. The numbers are the realities above, which pertain to spiritual entities. The letters pertain to the circle of material realities and of becoming.'

The science of letters, or *jafr,* is based essentially on *permutation.* To be precise, the permutation of the Arabic radicals was practised in the first gnostic Shiite circles, and it is their teaching which the doctrine of the Balance continues. We saw above (IV, 2) an example of its operation in the 'Book of the Glorious One' by Jabir. The validity of this treatment of the Arabic radicals rests on the Jabirian principle explained above, and which is generally speaking an Ismaili principle: by uniting herself to Nature (which for Nasir-i Khusraw is the *speculum Animae),* the soul of the world communicates her own harmony to this Nature, and creates bodies which are subject to number and quantity (this theme receives equally clear treatment at the hands of Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani). In the same way, the Soul gives expression to her own harmony both in *language* and in *music.* This postulates a close relationship between the structure of bodies and the structure of language (similarly, music is the concordance between the harmonious sound and the touch or pluck on the string). This is why Jabir rejects the idea that language may originate in an institution or a convention: language is not an accident. An institution cannot account for it, because it derives from a deliberate act on the part of the Soul of the world.

5. Thus, even in its gnostic aspect, the Jabirian Balance of letters, as a philosophy of language, leads back to the preoccupations of the philosopher-grammarians discussed above. Once again, this has been admirably demonstrated by the late Paul Kraus, in considerations of which we give a summary here. All that we know about the transmission of Greek philosophy to the Islamic thinkers enables us to make a direct connection on this point between the speculations of Jabir and those of Plato. Paul Kraus has shown what was common both to the Jabirian Balance, with its analysis of the words of the language, and to the *Cratylus,* in which the philosophy of language that Plato makes Socrates

express is based on principles similar to those of Jabir, as well as to the *Timaeus,* in which the physical elements are compared to the syllables of letters. On both sides there is the same concern to restore the primitive word *(asl,* the archetype, the *Urwort),* whose structure would exactly reproduce the structure of the thing designated. Although Jabir borrowed almost all his material from the Arabic grammarians, what he intends goes beyond the limited sphere of grammar. {The same is true of the antagonism between Basrah and Kufah.} It was this which made him focus his attention on the permutations of the consonants which make up the radicals (biliteral, triliteral, quadriliteral, quinquiliteral).

It must be understood that, given the state of the 'rigid and abstract radicals' in Semitic, the dissection of words is easier in that language than in Greek. (Because Arabic writing specifies only consonants, the syllable no longer has an intermediary role between letter and word, as is the case in Greek, where the syllable is closely allied to the expression of the vowel.) As a result, most of the radicals obtained by permutation really exist, and in this manner Jabir's speculations link up with those of the Arabic grammarians who attempted 'to elevate the principle of the permutation of letters to the status of a new linguistic discipline, the sole such discipline capable of elucidating the etymological parenthood of words'. This attempt resulted in what is known as 'superior etymology' *(ishtiqaq akbar),* that is to say, 'the theory which brings together in one and the same meaning all the possible permutations of a single radical'. This was effected by Ibn Jinni (d. 392/1001) a philologist as well as a theologian and philosopher, who was responsible for a profound transformation in the structure of the Arabic language.

6. Such speculations themselves, made easier by the structure of the Semitic languages, were so important for the theosophical and mystical thought of the following centuries, that it is worth recalling here when and how their foundations were laid. Also, the problems relating to writing and language attracted the attention of distinguished philosophers. Ahmad ibn Tayyib al-Sarakhsi, a follower of the al-Kindi mentioned above, invented a phonetic alphabet of forty letters designed for the transcription of foreign languages (Persian, Syriac, Greek). Al-Farabi (see below, V, 2), who studied grammar under the philologist Ibn al-Sarraj, to whom in return he taught logic and musical theory,

expounded the laws which rule 'the languages of all nations', and established the link between linguistics {*'ilm al-lisan)* and logic. Abu Hamza al-Isfahani introduces the term 'philosopher-grammarians' *(al-falasifah al-nahwiyin),* a term meant to describe those philosophers for whom logic was a sort of international grammar. All these labours, prompted by the linguistic complexity of Muslim civilization, represent an original and essential aspect of Islamic philosophy, and one that is too often ignored.

6. AL-BIRUNI

1. In the course of the fourth/tenth-fifth/eleventh centuries, which proved a golden age for mathematics and natural sciences in Islam, one of the outstanding figures is that of Abu al-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (or Beruni, in the ancient vocalization). His invaluable works, on history as well as on comparative religion, chronology, mathematics and astronomy, were famous in both East and West. He belonged to what has been called 'outer Iran'; he was born in 362/973 near the town of Khwarizm (Khorasmia), where he spent the first part of his life studying the different sciences, especially mathematics, under the tutorship of Abu Nasr al-Mansur. Later on, his travels took him to Gurgan and to other Iranian cities. After the conquest of Khwarizm by Mahmud of Ghaznah, al-Biruni was attached to the latter's entourage and accompanied him in his conquest of India. Afterwards he returned to Ghaznah, where he dedicated the rest of his life to study. He died in 448/1048.

2. Mahmud's bloody invasion of India had one compensation, if one may so put it, in the fact that it was there that the scholar in his entourage collected the material for his masterpiece. Al-Biruni's great book on India is unrivalled in the Islam of that time. Written at first hand, it remained the source of all that was written later on the religions and philosophies of India. In it, the author testifies to the harmony that he perceives to exist between Platonic-Pythagorean philosophy, Indian wisdom, and certain Sufi concepts in Islam.

Other writings of capital importance are the *Chronology of Ancient Peoples,* which was and still is a unique work, and the vast treatise on mathematics, astronomy and astrology, written by him in Arabic and Persian at the end of his life *(Kitab al- Tafhim,* ed. Humayi, Tehran,

1940), which for several centuries remained the standard work in these subjects. His *Kitab al-Jamahir* is the most ancient treatise on mineralogy written in Arabic; and here again the scope of al-Biruni's research is extraordinary, including as it does the mineralogical literature of Greece and India as well as that of Iran and Islam. His geographical work *Kitab al-tahdid* should be mentioned in connection with the monumental *Qanun al-mas'udi,* which does for cosmography and chronology what Avicenna's *Qanun* does for medicine, and which, had it been translated into Latin, would have attained equal fame. We should also mention a treatise on pharmacology *(Kitab al-Saydalah),* a few shorter treatises, and an exchange of questions and answers with Avicenna on the principles of natural philosophy among the Peripatetics. Several other works, including some philosophical treatises, are unfortunately lost.

3. The correspondence with Avicenna shows that al-Biruni was not only the founder of geodesy, an accomplished mathematician and astronomer, a geographer, and a linguist, but a philosopher as well. His deepest leanings were rather towards observation and induction in natural philosophy, and he was inclined to oppose several of the theses of Aristotelian philosophy and to adopt some of Rhazes' views. He even set about composing a catalogue of Rhazes' works, for he admired his doctrine in natural philosophy in spite of being opposed to his religious conceptions {see above, IV, 4).

One should also note that al-Biruni possessed a 'philosophy of history', evident in the background of several of his works. Having understood the nature of certain fossils and the sedimentary nature of the rocky terrains he had observed, he became convinced that in former times great cataclysms had taken place which left seas and lakes where once there had been dry land. When he transposed this observation to the sphere of human history, he arrived at the conception of periods analogous to the Indian *Yugas.* He felt convinced that in the course of each period, humanity is carried away by an ever-increasing corruption and materialism, until a tremendous disaster destroys civilization and God sends a new prophet, who will inaugurate a new period of history. Between this conception and the conception professed by Ismaili gnosis at the same period, there is an obvious relationship which it remains to explore.

7. AL-KHWARIZMI

Mention should at least be made here of one of al-Biruni's compatriots and contemporaries, Muhammad ibn Yusuf Katib al-Khwarizmi (d. 387/997), famous for his vast encyclopaedia entitled *Mafatih al-'ulum* (the 'Keys of the Sciences', ed. van Vloten, Leiden, 1895). It is divided into two large parts, the first of which deals with the Islamic sciences (canon law, the *kalam* or dialectic, grammar, writing, prosody, the traditions). The second deals consecutively with logic, philosophy, medicine, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music and chemistry.

8. IBN AL-HAYTHAM

1. At the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century we encounter one of the greatest mathematicians and physicians of the Middle Ages: Abu [4] All Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham (the *Alhazen* of the Latin scholastics), who was nicknamed *Ptolemaeus secundus.* He was born at Basrah, spent most of his life in Cairo, and died in 430/1038 at the age of seventy-six. In his over-confidence about the practical application of his mathematical knowledge, he assumed that he could regulate the floods caused by the overflow of the Nile. Ordered by the sixth Fatimid caliph, al-Hakim (386/996-411/1021) to carry out this operation, he quickly perceived the inanity of what he was attempting to do. He retired in disgrace, and devoted himself to his scientific work until his death.

He was an important influence in the fields of celestial physics, astronomy, optics, and the science of perspective. His philosophical presuppositions are still to be systematically examined; he was deeply learned in philosophical culture, for he had read Galen and Aristotle carefully, but his own philosophical work is unfortunately lost, or else remains unedited, like the *Kitab Thamarat al-hikmah,* 'the fruits of philosophy'.

2. His innovation in astronomical theory may be described as follows. For a long time, oriental astronomers had not troubled, any more than Ptolemy in his *Almagest*, to define the concept of the celestial Spheres. This was true of both Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad (or Muhammad) al-Purghftnl (the *Alfraganus* of the Latins during the Middle Ages), an Iranian astronomer from Transoxiana in the ninth century *[cf.* above,

I, 2), and of Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Battani *{Albategnius)*, a native of Harran whose family had professed the Sabian religion. They confined their attention to the mathematical aspect of the Spheres, as ideal circles representing the movement of the celestial bodies.

The learned Sabian astronomer Thabit ibn Qurrah, however, wrote a treatise in which he attributed to the heavens a physical constitution that could be made to accord with Ptolemy's system. After this, Ibn al-Haytham for the first time introduced the Aristotelian concept of the celestial Spheres into purely astronomical considerations. This situation is of great interest because, on the one hand, Ibn al-Haytham saw the problem in terms of celestial physics (as an essentially qualitative physics), following here Ptolemy in his *Hypotheses Planetarum*; for Ptolemy had also had recourse to a celestial physics deduced from the nature of the substance of which heaven is formed, and had simply substituted his own physics for that of Aristotle's *De Caelo*. But, on the other hand, a Ptolemaic celestial physics which accorded with the theory of epicycles and concentrics quite simply spelled the ruin of Aristotle's celestial physics. What the latter postulated was a system of homocentric Spheres whose common centre is the centre of the Earth.

Wherever, in Islam, one encounters the claim of strict adherence to, or the call for, the restoration of pure Peripateticism, there of necessity one also encounters a fierce antagonism towards Ptolemaic doctrines. This was the case in Andalusia, where the conflict resulted in the system of Nur al-Din Abu Ishaq al-Bitruji (the *Alpetragius* of the Latins) which fulfilled the aspirations of Averroes, and which up to the sixteenth century was promoted as an alternative to Ptolemy's system *(cf.* also below, VIII, 3). At bottom, the problem belongs essentially to the domain of philosophy (and is one of the philosophical problems of the *Weltanschauungen)*, for it is above all concerned with two ways of perceiving the world, two different senses of the universe and of the *situs* within it. Since both sides fixed the number of the angelic Intelligences that move the Heavens in relation to the number of the Spheres, in whose motion one had to isolate the total motion of each planet, the 'decentralization' effected by Ptolemy's system also had repercussions on angelology. The same repercussion resulted from acknowledging the existence of a Ninth Sphere, as did Ibn

al-Haytham, following here the Alexandrians and the neo-Platonist Simplicius. The existence of the Ninth Sphere was seen to be essential from the time that the precession of the equinoxes was recognized; it is the Sphere of Spheres *(falak al-aflak)*, the all-encompassing Sphere, deprived of stars, and moved by the diurnal motion from east to west which it communicates to the whole of our universe.

The Peripatetics as well as the strict orthodox Muslims in Andalusia accorded an equally hostile reception to this celestial physics, for different reasons. A follower of Maimonides, who was present in 1192 at the burning of the library of a doctor who was thought to be atheist, saw a copy of Ibn al-Haytham's astronomy thrown into the flames by the hands of a pious *faqih*. On the other hand, the *ishraqiyun* of Iran (see below, VII} were not content with one single Sphere (the Eighth) for the multitude of fixed stars. However, in this case, far from angelology curbing their astronomy, it was the very 'dimensions' of their angelology which enabled them to sense the unlimited spaces of an astronomy which, while exploding the traditional schemas, nevertheless does not unpeople the infinite spaces of their spiritual 'presences'.

3. This same connection with the theory of spiritual beings may be perceived in the part played by Ibn al-Haytham's treatise on optics, known to the whole of the Latin Middle Ages as' Alhazen' s *Perspective*[1] *(Opticae Thesaurus* in seven books, plus the treatise *De crepusculis* on atmospherical refractions, first edition, 1542). Ibn al-Haytham is regarded as having been the originator of the solution to the problem of finding the point of reflection on a spherical mirror, given the position of the object and that of the eye. At any rate, his theory of optical perception, which implied a process that cannot be attributed simply to the action of the faculties of sense, had a considerable influence. It has been said that in the West the hierarchies of Dionysius the Areopagite and the optics of Ibn al-Haytham, the theory of hierarchical illuminations and the metaphysics of light, are connected (E. Gilson). One could make the same observation with respect to al-Suhrawardi's 'oriental theosophy' (see below, VII), which is essentially based on a metaphysics of light and a system of angelic hierarchies deriving both from late neo-Platonism and from the Mazdean philosophy of ancient Persia. The concept of light in al-Suhrawardi and in Robert Grosseteste have something in common. This common element is also evident when

Roger Bacon—who on this point owes everything to Alhazen—makes the *Perspective* the fundamental science among the sciences of Nature and, applying geometrical examples of this perspective to light, turns them into symbols. Both sides, we may say, possess an esoteric method of spiritual interpretation of the laws of optics and perspective, an interpretation which is based on the same cosmogony of light. We can thus acknowledge the validity of those diagrams which point to something resembling a topography of the spiritual universe.

9. SHAHMARDAN AL-RAZI

At the end of the fifth/eleventh century and the beginning of the sixth/twelfth, Shahmardan ibn Abi al-Khayr al-Razi {meaning a native of Rayy) was one of Iran's greatest astronomers and physicians. He lived mainly in the north-east, in Gorgan and Astarabad. Attention should be drawn to two of his works: the *Garden of the Astronomers {Rawdat al-munajjimin),* and, in Persian, an interesting encyclopaedia of natural sciences *(Nuzhat-namah 'Ala'i,* which contains, among other things, a lengthy biography of Jabir ibn Hayyan.

V. The Hellenizing Philosophers

FOREWORD

We are concerned with the group of *falasifah* (the plural form of *faylasuf,* which is the Arabic transcription of the Greek *philosophos),* a group to which, it has been claimed, the role of philosophy in Islam is confined. What we have already said makes it unnecessary for us to emphasize the total misconception of such a claim and what a prejudice it represents. It is difficult to trace the exact boundaries between the use of the terms *falsafah* (philosophy) and *hikmat ilahlyah (theosophia).* But it appears that after al-Suhrawardi the latter term has been used more and more to designate the doctrine of the complete sage, who is both philosopher and mystic.

With regard to the *falasifah,* it will be recalled that they possessed a body of works by Aristotle and his commentators, and texts by Plato and Galen, in Arabic translation. However, in the case of works such as the *Theology* attributed to Aristotle, or the 'Book on the Pure Good' (see above, I, 2), our thinkers found themselves in the presence of an Aristotle who was actually a neo-Platonist. Even though the term *mashsha'un* (the literal equivalent of the word 'peripatetics') is used commonly in Arabic, and contrasts with *ishraqiyun* (the 'Platonists'; see below, VII), those designated by this term are none the less to some degree 'Islamic neo-Platonists'. There was, it is true, a 'peripatetic' reaction in Andalusia, led by Averroes, which had simultaneously to confront both Avicennan neo-Platonism and al-Ghazali's theological critique. But this peripateticism itself was not absolutely pure. In any case, Averroism flourished in the West, whereas in the East, and particularly in Iran, the neo-Platonic inspiration was always fundamental. With the aid of this inspiration al-Suhrawardi was able to realize his project of restoring the theosophy of ancient pre-Islamic Persia; and it formed a spontaneous bond with the gnosis of Ibn al-'Arabi and the metaphysics of Sufism, as well as with the traditional

teaching of the Shiite Imams {in the work of Haydar Amuli and Ibn Abi Jumhur in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). All this body of teaching was fully developed in the school of Isfahan at the time of the Safavid Renaissance in the sixteenth century, in the monumental works of Mir Damad, Mulla Sadra and Qadi Sa'id Qummi—also in the sixteenth century—and in the works of their pupils and their pupils' pupils down to the Shaykhi school. A single guiding thought governs the formation of a solid structure. Nothing justifies the use of the facile term 'syncretism', a term only too often employed either in order to discredit a doctrine or else to disguise the maladroitness of an unacknowledged dogmatism.

1. AL-KINDI AND HIS PUPILS

1. Abu Yusuf ibn Ishaq al-Kindi is the first in this group of philosophers whose works have survived, in part at least. He was born in Kufah around 185/801 into an aristocratic Arabic family of the Kindah tribe, from the south of Arabia, which earned him the honorific title of 'Philosopher of the Arabs'. His father was governor of Basrah, where al-Kindi himself spent his childhood and received his primary education. He then went to Baghdad, where he enjoyed the patronage of the Abbasid caliphs al-Ma'mun and al-Mu'tasim (218/833-227/842). The latter's son, Prince Ahmad, was the friend and mentor of al-Kindi, who dedicated several of his treatises to him. But during the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil (232/847-247/861) al-Kindi, like his Mu'tazilite friends, fell out of favour. He died, a lonely man, in Baghdad in about 260/873 (the year of al-Ash'ari's birth, and also the year in which in Shiism the 'lesser occultation' of the twelfth Imam begins).

In Baghdad our philosopher was involved in the scientific movement stimulated by the translation of Greek texts into Arabic. He himself cannot be considered a translator of ancient texts, but, being a well-to-do aristocrat, he had a large number of Christian collaborators and translators working for him, though he often 'touched up' the translations with respect to Arabic terms that the latter found difficult. Thus the famous *Theology* attributed to Aristotle was translated for him by 'Abd al-Masih al-Himsi (meaning from Emesa; see above, I, 2); and this work had a profound influence on his thought. Ptolemy's *Geography* and part of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* were also translated for him by Eustathios. The Catalogue *{Fihrist)* of Ibn al-Nadim lists more than

260 works under the name of al-Kindi, most of which have unfortunately been lost.

2. He was known in the West principally for some treatises which were translated into Latin in the Middle Ages: *Tractates de erroribus philosophorum, De quinque essentiis* (matter, form, motion, space and time), *De somno et visione, De intellectu.* A few years ago, about thirty treatises by him were discovered by chance in Istanbul, and a number of these have since been edited, most notably the treatise *On the First Philosophy,* the treatise *On the Classification of Aristotle's Works,* and the Arabic original of the treatise *On the Intellect,* a work particularly important for the gnosiology of his successors.

The existing works of al-Kindi thus show him to have been not just a mathematician and a geometer, as certain of his Islamic biographers, such as al-Shahrazuri, have maintained, but a philosopher in the full sense of the word as it was then understood. Al-Kindi took an interest in metaphysics as well as in astronomy and astrology, in music, arithmetic and geometry. We know that he wrote a treatise about the 'five Platonic bodies', with the title 'On the reason why the Ancients related the five figures to the Elements'. He took an interest in the different branches of the natural sciences, such as pharmacology. His treatise 'On the knowledge of the powers of compound medicine' shows an affinity with the ideas of Jabir about degrees of intensity in Nature (see above, IV, 2). In short, he is a fair illustration of the type of philosopher whose scope is universal, as was that of al-Farabi, Avicenna, Nasir Tusi and many others.

3. Although he was closely in touch with the Mu'tazilites (see above, IE, 1) who, prior to the reign of al-Mutawakkil, were in favour at the 'Abbasid court, al-Kindi was not part of their group—he aimed at something quite different from the dialecticians of the *kalam.* He was guided by the sense of a fundamental harmony between philosophical research and prophetic revelation. His aim accords with that of the prophetic philosophy outlined above (ch. II), a philosophy which we described as being the authentic expression of a prophetic religion such as Islam. Al-Kindi was convinced that doctrines such as the creation of the world *ex nihilo,* corporeal resurrection, and prophecy, have neither origin nor warranty in rational dialectic. This is why his gnosiology distinguishes between a human knowledge (*'ilm insani)*

which comprises logic, the *quadrivium* and philosophy, and a divine knowledge (*'ilm ilahi)* which is revealed only to the prophets. Nevertheless, it is always a question of two forms or degrees of knowledge which, far from being in opposition, are in perfect harmony. In his treatise on the duration of the Arab empire, too, our philosopher foresees that it will endure for 693 years, led to this conclusion by calculations derived from Greek sciences, particularly astrology, as well as from the interpretation of the Quranic text.

In accepting the idea of creation *ex nihilo,* al-Kindi regards the foundation *(ibda')* of the world as an act of God rather than as an emanation. Only after establishing that the First Intelligence depends on the act of the divine will does he accept the idea of the emanation of the hierarchical Intelligences, in the manner of the neo-Platonists—a schema which entirely corresponds to that of Ismaili cosmogony. Similarly, he makes a distinction between the world of divine activity and the world of the activity of Nature, which is the activity of becoming and of change.

4. Some aspects of the philosophical doctrine of al-Kindi go back to John Philoponus, just as others go back to the school of the neo-Platonists at Athens. The distinction that he draws between primary and secondary substances, his faith in the validity of astrology, his interest in the occult sciences, his distinction between rational philosophical truth and revealed truth, which he understands to be something like the *ars hieratica* of the last neo-Platonists—these are all features common both to the 'Philosopher of the Arabs' and to neo-Platonists such as Proclus, and in some respects they also echo the Sabians of Harran.

If al-Kindi was influenced by the *Theology* attributed to Aristotle, he was also influenced by Alexander of Aphrodisias, whose commentary on the *De anima* inspired him, in his own treatise *De intellectu [Fi al- 'Aql),* to make the quadruple division of the intellect which was later to exert considerable influence, present many problems, and receive various solutions among both Muslim and Christian philosophers. He was also influenced to a certain extent by the neo-Pythagoreans in the importance which he attached to mathematics. The *Fihrist* lists a treatise by him on the necessity of studying mathematics in order to master philosophy. These influences merge with the general Islamic perspective, whose truths are regarded by al-Kindi as so many lamps

lighting the way of the philosopher. He is rightly considered to be a pioneer, the first of the 'peripatetics' in the special sense that this word, as we saw, possesses in Islamic philosophy. If he was known to the Latin West as a philosopher through the few treatises mentioned above, he was also known as a mathematician and a master of astrology. Jerome Cardan, in his book *De subtilitate* {lib. XVI), says of him that he was one of the twelve most influential figures in human history.

S. As we mentioned above, he had his collaborators, and he also had his followers. Two of these were Bactrians: Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi, the well-known astrologer, and Abu Zayd al-Balkhi, a free-thinking philosopher who was not afraid of scandal when he maintained that the divine Names which occur in the Quran are borrowed from the Syriac!

The most famous of his philosopher-pupils was Ahmad ibn Tayyib al-Sarakhsi (meaning a native of Sarakhs in Khurasan, on the present-day frontier between Iran and Russian Turkistan). Al-Sarakhsi, who was born in 218/833 and died in 286/899, is an arresting figure, whose works, which are lost, are known to us through the many quotations from them which appear here and there *[cf.* above, IV, 1). We have already mentioned {IV, 5)his invention of a phonetic alphabet, recounted at length by Abu Hamza al-Isfahani. With regard to the appellations by which the Stoics are designated in Arabic, he presents us with information which is all the more valuable in that Islamic tradition is somewhat unclear on the subject of the Stoics. As we have observed more than once, this did not prevent a good number of Stoic-inspired ideas from being introduced early on, ideas which played a very important part in all the anti-Peripatetic movements. The Stoics are sometimes designated as *ashab al-riwaq* or *riwaqiyun* (the word *riwaq* meaning gallery or peristyle); sometimes as *ashab al-ustuwan* (the word *ustuwan* meaning gallery or stoa), and sometimes as *ashab al-mazall* (plural of *mazallah,* meaning tent; this was rendered in the medieval Latin translations as *philosophi tabernaculorum!).* Al-Sarakhsi diversifies these three designations on the basis of a tradition according to which the three terms refer to three schools, those of Alexandria, Baalbek and Antioch respectively. The subject requires an entire monograph to itself. The theory of the Elements in Jabir presupposes a Stoicizing interpretation of Peripatetic data. Al-Suhrawardi is sometimes regarded as a *riwaq.* Finally, as we saw above

(I,1), Ja'far al-Kashfi demonstrated the homology of the Stoic position and that of the spiritual exegetes of the Quran.

2. AL-FARABI

1. Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Uzalagh al-Farabi was born at Wasij, near Farab in Transoxiana, in 259/872—about a year, therefore, before al-Kindi's death in Baghdad. He came from a noble family, and his father had held a military post at the Samanid court. But as was the case with his predecessor, al-Kindi, whose example he followed, few details about his life are known. When he was still young he went to Baghdad, where his first teacher was a Christian by the name of Yuhanna ibn Haylam. Then he went on to study logic, grammar, philosophy, music, mathematics and science. It is apparent from his works that he understood Turkish and Persian (and legend has it that apart from Arabic he was able to understand seventy languages!). Progressively he acquired the mastery which earned him the title of *Magister secundus* (Aristotle was the *Magister primus),* and which led to him being viewed as the first great Muslim philosopher. All the evidence supports an opinion current in Iran to the effect that this great philosopher was a Shiite. In 330/941, he did in fact leave Baghdad for Aleppo, where he enjoyed the protection of the Hamdanid Shiite dynasty—Sayf al-Dawlah al-Hamdani had a profound veneration for him. It was not by chance that he received this special Shiite protection. Its meaning becomes fully evident when we are made aware of the affinities between al-Farabi's 'prophetic philosophy' and the prophetic philosophy based on the teaching of the Shiite Imams, described above (ch. II). After his sojourn in Aleppo, al-Farabi made some further journeys, going as far as Cairo, and he died at Damascus in 339/950, at the age of eighty.

This great philosopher was profoundly religious in spirit, and a mystic. He lived extremely simply, and he even wore the garb of the Sufis. By nature he was essentially contemplative, and held himself apart from worldly things. On the other hand, he liked taking part in musical gatherings, and was himself a remarkable performer. He wrote a long book 'on music' which demonstrates his knowledge of mathematics, and which is without doubt the most important account of the theory of music in the Middle Ages. Moreover, it was not superficial optimism that led this philosopher-musician to seek and perceive the

harmony between Plato and Aristotle (the Aristotle of the *Theology),* as he perceived the harmony between philosophy and prophetic religion. It seems that the *Magister secundus*'s profound sense of things derived from the idea that wisdom had begun with the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia; that from there it had passed to Egypt, then to Greece, where it had entered history through being written down; and that he thought that to him fell the task of bringing back this wisdom to the country where it had originated.

2. His many works comprise (or comprised) commentaries on the Aristotelian *corpus:* on the *Organon*, the *Physics*, the *Meteorology*, the *Metaphysics*, the *Nichomachean Ethics.* All these commentaries are now lost. We can only mention here some of his main works (cf. Bibliography): the great treatise on the *Harmony between the doctrines of the two Sages*, *Plato and Aristotle;* the treatise on *'The object of the different books of Aristotle's Metaphysics';* the analysis of Plato's *Dialogues;* the treatise *What one must know before learning philosophy*, an introduction to the philosophy of Aristotle; the treatise *De scientiis (Ihsa' al-'ulum),* which had an enormous influence on the theory of the classification of the sciences in Western scholasticism; the treatise *De intellectu et intellecto*, mentioned above; the *Gems of Wisdom (Fosus al-hikam),* the work most studied in the East. Finally there is the group of treatises concerning what is commonly called the 'political philosophy' of al-Farabi, the most important of which are the *Treatise on the Opinions of the Members of the Perfect City (or the Ideal City),* the *Book of the Government of the City*, the *Book of the Attainment of Happiness*, and a commentary on Plato's *Laws.*

We have just mentioned the *Gems of Wisdom.* There is no good reason to doubt the authenticity of this Treatise. The blunder committed in an anthology once published in Cairo, when part of this treatise was printed under the name of Avicenna and with another title, is of no critical consequence. Paul Kraus' opinion was that al-Farabi's attitude was basically anti-mystical, that neither the style nor the content of the *Gems* accorded with the rest of his work, and that his theory of prophecy was exclusively 'political'.

We can attest that the terminology of Sufism occurs practically everywhere in al-Farabi's work; that elsewhere than in the *Gems* there is a text which echoes the famous recital of Plotinian ecstasy in the Book of the *Theology* ('Often, awakening to myself...'); that al-

Farabi's theory of illumination conceals an element which is undeniably mystical, if it is admitted that mysticism does not necessarily postulate *ittihad* (unitive fusion) between the human intellect and the active Intelligence, because *ittisal* (attainment, conjunction without identification} is itself also a mystical experience. Avicenna and al-Suhrawardi are, furthermore, in agreement with al-Farabi in their rejection of *ittihad*, because it entails contradictory consequences. We may further attest that it is not hard to grasp the link between al-Farabi's 'mysticism' and the rest of his doctrine: there is no hiatus or dissonance. If one notes that in the *Gems* he uses terms deriving from Ismailism (which in any case are common to all gnosis or *'irfan)*, this fact, far from invalidating its authenticity, is simply evidence of one of his sources of inspiration—the very source which establishes the accord between his philosophy of prophetism and the prophetology of Shiism. Finally, it is wrong to 'politicize', in the modern sense of the word, his doctrine of the ideal City; it has nothing to do with what we call a 'political programme'. On this point we fully support the excellent overall account of al-Farabi's philosophical doctrine propounded some time ago by Ibrahim Madkour.

3. We can here do no more than draw attention to three aspects of this philosophical doctrine. In the first place, we are indebted to him for the thesis which draws a distinction not only logical but metaphysical between essence and existence in created beings. Existence is not an inherent quality of essence, but only a predicate or an accident of essence. It has been said that this thesis marked a turning-point in the history of metaphysics. Avicenna, al-Suhrawardi and many others in their turn all professed a metaphysics of essences. It was only with Mulla Sadra Shirazi in the sixteenth century that the situation was decisively reversed. Mulla Sadra affirmed the predominance of *existing* and gave an 'existential' version of the metaphysics of the *Ishraq.* This perspective on the question of being gave rise to the distinction between Being that is necessary in itself, and contingent being that cannot exist by itself (because its existence or non-existence lack determination) but which is transformed into necessary being through the fact that its existence is established by another—i.e. by the Necessary Being itself. This thesis, which was to be so important for Avicenna, was first expounded, albeit more concisely, by al-Farabi.

4. The same can be said of the second distinctive doctrine, that of the theory of the Intelligence and of the procession of Intelligences, enjoined in al-Farabi by the principle *ex uno non fit nisi unum* (a principle that was to be called into question by Nasir Thusi, whose unacknowledged inspiration in so doing was the schema of the procession of the pure Lights in al-Suhrawardi). The emanation of the First Intelligence from the first Being, its three acts of contemplation which are repeated in turn by each of the hierarchical Intelligences, and which engender each time a triad composed of a new Intelligence, a new Soul and a new Heaven, down to the Tenth Intelligence—this same cosmogonic process was later described and expanded by Avicenna. The first divine Essences, Aristotle's star-gods, become 'separate Intelligences' in al-Farabi. Was it Avicenna who first gave them the name of 'Angels', thus arousing the suspicions of al-Ghazali who failed to find in them the exact image of the angel of the Quran? Did these creative archangelic forms spell the ruin of monotheism? Yes indeed, if what is in question is the *exoteric* version of monotheism and of the dogma which supports it. On the other hand, esoteric and mystical thinkers have never ceased to demonstrate that in its exoteric form monotheism falls into the very idolatry that it is attempting the escape. Al-Farabi was contemporary with the first great Ismaili thinkers. His theory of the Ten Intelligences, when compared with that of Ismaili esotericism, may be seen in a new light. In our brief analysis (see above, II, B, 1,2) of the structure of the pleroma of the Ten among the Ismailis of the Fatimid tradition, we noted that it differs from the schema of the emanationist philosophers in that as principle it postulates a Supra-Being beyond both being and non-being, and sees Emanation as starting only with the First Intelligence. Moreover, Ismaili cosmogony contains a dramatic element which is lacking in the schema of al-Farabi and Avicenna.

Nevertheless, the Ismaili figure of the Tenth Angel (the celestial Adam) corresponds perfectly to the Tenth Intelligence which our philosophers here call the active Intelligence *(al-'aql al-fa' 'al).* This correspondence makes us finally able to understand better the role of the active Intelligence in the prophetology of al-Farabi, because in his whole theory of the Intelligence, as well as in his theory of the Sage-Prophet, al-Farabi is something more than a 'Hellenizing philosopher'. He made a comparison which became popular, and which

everyone repeated after him: 'The active Intelligence is to the possible intellect of man what the sun is to the eye, which is potential vision so long as it is in darkness.' This Intelligence, which in the hierarchy of being is the spiritual being next above man and the world of men, is always in act. It is called the 'Giver of Forms' {*wahib al-suwar, dator formarum),* because it radiates forms into matter, and radiates into the human potential intellect the knowledge of these forms.

This human intellect is subdivided into the theoretical or contemplative intellect, and the practical intellect. The theoretical intellect goes through three states: it is possible or potential intellect in relation to knowledge; it is intellect in act while it is acquiring knowledge; it is acquired intellect when it has acquired knowledge. Here precisely is something new in al-Farabi's gnosiology. In spite of its name, the acquired intellect (*'aql mustafad, intellectus adeptus)* cannot be confused with the *nous epiktetos* of Alexander of Aphrodisias, for whom it is an intermediary state between the potential intellect and the intellect in act. For al-Farabi, it is the human intellect in a higher state, a state in which it is able to receive, through intuition and illumination, the Forms which are irradiated into it by the active Intelligence without passing through the intermediary of the senses. In short, the idea of the active Intelligence, like that of the acquired intellect, is evidence in al-Farabi of something other than pure Aristotelianism: it denotes the influence of the Book of the *Theology,* with all the neo-Platonic elements that it brings in its train.

5. The same is true of this Hellenizing philosopher with respect to a third point: the theory of prophetism which is the crowning glory of his work. His theory of the 'perfect City' bears a Greek stamp in virtue of its Platonic inspiration, but it fulfils the philosophical and mystical aspirations of a philosopher of Islam. It is often spoken of as al-Farabi's 'politics'. In fact, al-Farabi was not at all what we call today a 'man of action'; he had no knowledge of public affairs at first hand. His 'politics' depends on his whole cosmology and psychology, and is inseparable from them. Thus his concept of the 'perfect City' encompasses all the earth inhabited by man, the *oikoumen.* It is not a 'functional' political programme. His so-called political philosophy could be better designated as a prophetic philosophy.

Both its dominating figure—the head of the ideal City: the prophet, the *Imam*—and the denouement of the theory in the world beyond

reveal al-Farabi's mystical inspiration; yet, more than this, his prophetology shares certain essential features with the prophetic philosophy of Shiism (see above, II). Unfortunately this observation and its consequences cannot be expanded on here. The arguments on which al-Farabi bases the necessity of the existence of prophets, the features defining the inner being of the prophet, the guide or Imam, correspond to the arguments which in Shiite prophetology are based, as we saw, on the teaching of the holy Imams. The prophet-legislator during his lifetime is also the Imam. After the prophet begins the cycle of the Imamate (or the cycle of the *walayah,* the name denoting in the Islamic period the *nubuwah* or prophecy pure and simple, which does not involve the *shari'ah).* It al-Farabi's sage-prophet establishes 'laws' *(nawamis),* this does not actually imply a *shari'ah* the strict theological sense of the word. The conjunction of the two prophetologies throws new light on the idea which makes the Platonic sage, the philosopher-ruler of the ideal City, into an *Imam.*

6. Furthermore, we saw how Shiite prophetology culminates in a gnosiology which distinguishes the mode of knowledge of the Prophet from that of the Imam. Similarly, for al-Farabi the prophet-Imam, the head of the perfect City, must have attained the highest degree of human happiness, namely that which consists in union with active Intelligence. This union is in fact the source of all prophetic revelation and all inspiration. As we have already noted, this is not a unitive fusion or an identification *(ittihad),* but an attainment and a reunion *(ittisal).* It is therefore important to remember that in contrast to Plato's Sage, who must descend from the contemplation of the lntelligibles to the domain of public affairs, al-Farabi's Sage must unite himself with the spiritual beings; his main function is in fact to lead the citizens towards this goal, for absolute happiness depends on such a union. The ideal City described by al-Farabi is more the city of the 'latter-day saints'; it corresponds to a state of things which, in Shiite eschatology, will be realized on earth at the coming of the hidden Imam in preparation for the Resurrection. Is it then possible to apply to al-Farabi's 'politics' the same meaning that the word has today?

On the other hand, with regard to the 'prince' on whom al-Farabi confers all the human and philosophical virtues, he may rightly be said to be a 'Plato clothed in the prophetic mantle of Muhammad'. More accurately, we must agree with al-Farabi that union with the active

Intelligence can be effected by the intellect. This is what happens in the case of the philosopher, because this union is the source of all philosophical knowledge. The union can also be effected by the imagination, in which case it is the source of revelation, inspiration and prophetic dreams. We saw above how Shiite prophetic philosophy gave rise to an entire theory of the Imagination, which vindicated imaginative knowledge and the world perceived by such knowledge. It is significant that in al-Farabi the theory of the imagination likewise plays a crucial role. If one refers to the work of Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi which comments upon the teaching of the Imams, one is no longer entitled to say that al-Farabi's theory of prophetism was taken seriously only by Jewish scholasticism (Maimonides), for it was an immensely fruitful one for Shiite prophetic philosophy.

7. The gnosiology which derives from this prophetic philosophy {see above, n, A, 5} is established essentially as a function of the degrees of vision or audition of the Angel, whether in dream, in a state of waking, or in the intermediary state. For al-Farabi, the Sage is united with the active Intelligence through speculative meditation; the prophet is united with it through the Imagination, and it is the source of prophetism and of prophetic revelation. This conception is only possible because the Muhammadan archangel—Gabriel, the Holy Spirit—is identified with the active Intelligence. As we have already observed here, this is in no way rationalization of the Holy Spirit—rather, the contrary is the case. The identification of the Angel of Knowledge with the Angel of Revelation is actually demanded by a prophetic philosophy: this is the orientation of all al-Farabi's doctrine. For this reason it would be inadequate to say that he provided Revelation with a philosophical basis, as it would be inaccurate to say that he placed the philosopher above the prophet. Such a manner of speaking denotes ignorance of the nature of prophetic philosophy. Philosopher and prophet are united with the same Intelligence-Holy Spirit. The case of al-Farabi is an excellent illustration of the situation we have already described. The relationship between legalistic Islam and philosophy is possibly one of irreconcilable opposition. The fundamental relationship is that between esoteric Islam (in the broad sense of the Greek *ta eso),* and exoteric, literalist religion. One judges the fate and role of philosophy in Islam according to whether one affirms or rejects its esoteric aspect.

Having said this, we should note that the ideal City, perfect as it

is, does not constitute an end in itself for al-Farabi. It is a way of bringing men closer to supra-terrestrial happiness. When they pass the doors of death, the troops of the living rejoin the troops of those who went before them into the beyond, 'and they unite themselves with them intelligibly, each one being united with his likeness'. Through this union of soul with soul, the sweetness and delight of those who went first are ceaselessly and indefinitely increased and multiplied. Here again a vision such as this is very close to the anticipations of Ismaili eschatology, when it describes the reunion of the Forms of light which constitute the Temple of Light of the Imamate.

8. We know of only a small number of al-Farabi's pupils. Prominent among them was Abu Zakariya' Yahya ibn 'Adi (d. 374/984), a Jacobite Christian philosopher already mentioned here in connection with his translation of Aristotle. There is an interesting philosophical correspondence between Yahya ibn 'Adi and Jewish philosopher from Mosul, Ibn Abi Sa'id al-Mawsili. A pupil of Yahya ibn 'Adi, Muhammad Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani {d. 371/981, not to be confused with the Ismaili Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani), during the second half of the tenth century brought together a circle of cultured men in Baghdad who held brilliant 'cultural' meetings. We owe our knowledge of the essentials of these meetings to a book by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhldi (d. 399 /1009), a follower of Abu Sulayman—a unique book which is packed with interesting information *{Kitab al-Muqabasah).* However, this was not a circle of philosophers in the strict sense. Their discussions on al-Farabi's logic appear to have degenerated into a purely verbal philosophy. And many things were said which are not to be taken too seriously (for example, Abu Sulayman's boasting remark that he knew the true author of the writings attributed to Jabir ibn Hayyan, which we mentioned above). In fact, al-Farabi's true spiritual posterity is found in Avicenna, who acknowledged him as his master. He was influential in Andalusia (especially for Ibn Bajjah; see below, VIII, 3) and for al-Suhrawardi. This influence can also be perceived, as we saw, in Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi.

3. ABU AL-HASAN AL-'AMDU

1. Abu al-Hasan Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-' Amiri has been little known in the West up till now. Yet in the tradition of philosophers studied

in this chapter, this Iranian from Khurasan was an important figure between al-Farabi and Avicenna. He was born at Nishapur. His teacher was another great Khurasanian, Abu Zayd Ahmad ibn Sahl al-Balkhi. He received a complete education in philosophy and metaphysics, commentated some texts by Aristotle, and conducted a whole philosophical correspondence with Avicenna. (This constitutes the *Book of the Fourteen Questions,* with Avicenna's answers.) He made two journeys to Baghdad, one before 360/970 and one in 364/974, where it seems that he was alarmed by the customs of the inhabitants. He returned to Iran and spent five years in Rayy under the protection of the vizir Ibn al-'Amid, entirely occupied with his teaching. He then returned to his native Khurasan, where he died in 381/991.

He had many followers and friends, such as Abu al-Qasim al-Katib, who was closely allied with Ibn Hindu; Ibn Maskuyah {see below, V, 5), who quotes him in *Jawidan Kharad,* and in particular Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi {see above, V, 2), who quotes him frequently. He is also quoted by Avicenna in his *Kitab al-Najat al-nafs,* albeit with certain reservations about his philosophical abilities. Nevertheless, those of his works which have survived, together with his appraisals of other philosophers, show him to have been not devoid of originality: there is a treatise on happiness *(sa 'adah),* chapters *(fusul)* on metaphysical questions *(ma'alim ilahlyah),* treatises on optical perception *(ibsar),* on the concept of eternity *(abad),* on the excellences of Islam, on predestination and free will *(jabr and qadar),* and a work in Persian *(Farrukh-Namah).* In the *Fusul he* speaks of the union of the intellect, intellection and the object of intellection in terms which were apparently to inspire Afdal al-Din al-Kashani {seventh/thirteenth century), a follower of Nasir al-Din Tusi.

2. Al-Tawhidi acquaints us with a number of discussions and debates in which Abu al-Hasan took part. Worth mentioning here is a discussion with Mani the Mazdean {Mani al-Majusi, not to be confused, obviously, with the prophet of Manichaeism) in the course of which our philosopher reveals himself to be a good Platonist {'Each sensible thing is a shadow of the intelligible— The Intelligence is the caliph of God in this world'). Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi {d. 1050/1640) refers to his doctrines in his great Summa of philosophy *(Kitab al-Asfar-arba 'ah).* Likewise one of the lessons by the same author on al-Suhrawardi's *Oriental Theosophy* (sect. 134, *cf.* **below,** VIII) makes an interesting

point in an *excursus.* He alludes to the book *On the Concept of Eternity (al-Amad 'ala al-Abad),* in which Abu al-Hasan al-'Amiri attributes to Empedocles the doctrine maintaining that if one says of the Creator, who is without attributes, that he *is* generosity, force, power, this does not mean that the faculties or powers which these Names designate really exist in him.

We will once more encounter the theories of the neo-Empedocles in the works of Ibn Masarrah in Andalusia (see below, VIII, 1). They had a certain influence on al-Suhrawardi (the polarity of *qahr* and *mahabbah,* domination and love)—it is worth noting here this other evidence of their influence in Iran. Finally, it appears that in 'political' philosophy, Abu al-Hasan al-'Amiri was especially influenced by the Iranian works translated from Pahlavi by Ibn al-Muqaffa', and professes a doctrine less under the influence of Platonic Hellenism than that of al-Farabi.

3. We must also mention here a philosopher who is known only for a short work on the soul, Bakr ibn al-Qasim al-Mawsili (meaning from Mosul). Although Bakr lived in the exciting times when the Christians were commentating Aristotle in Baghdad, when al-Farabi was elaborating a doctrine with enduring consequences, and Rhazes was causing a scandal with his doctrine, he seems none the less to have been unaffected by all these currents. Of the authors of the Islamic period he quotes only the Sabian philosopher Thabit ibn Qurrah, a choice whose exclusiveness is evidence of the considerable influence wielded by the Sabian philosopher from Harran (see above, IV, 1).

4. AVICENNA AND AVICENNISM

1. Abu 'Ali al-Husayn ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Sina was born at Afshana in the neighbourhood of Bukhara, in the month of Safar 370/August 980. When some of his works were translated into Latin in the twelfth century, the Spanish pronunciation of his name, 'Aben' or 'Aven Sina' gave rise to the form *Avicenna,* by which he is universally known in the West. His father was a high functionary in the Samanid government. Thanks to his autobiography, which was completed by his *famulus* and faithful follower al-Juzjani, we know the most important details about his life.

He was an extraordinarily precocious child. His education was **encyclopaedic,** and **encompassed** grammar **and** geometry, physics and

medicine, law and theology. His reputation was such that at the age of seventeen he was summoned by the Samanid prince Nuh ibn Mansur and succeeded in curing him. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* presented him, however, with an insurmountable obstacle: he read it through forty times without understanding it. It was owing to a treatise by al-Farabi which he came across by chance that 'the scales fell from his eyes'. His avowal of gratitude is a pleasure to read. At the age of eighteen he was more or less familiar with all forms of knowledge, and it only remained for him to deepen his understanding. After his father's death, he began to travel through Khurasan, but this Iranian from Transoxiana was never to cross the borders of the Iranian world. He lived first at Gurgan (south-east of the Caspian Sea), where the friendship of the prince, Abu Muhammad al-Shirazi, enabled him to teach publicly, and where he began to write his great *Canon* of medicine *{al-Qanun fi al-Tibb),* which for several centuries formed the basis of medical studies in the West, and continues to do so in the Islamic East today.

After a sojourn at Rayy—a town mentioned frequently here, a few kilometres to the south of present-day Tehran—where the philosopher had taken service with the queen-regent Sayyidah and her young son Majd al-Dawlah, Avicenna went on to Qazwin and then to Hamadhan, in western Iran. The prince of Hamadhan, Shams al-Dawlah *(Sol regni* in the Latin translation) bestowed the vizirate on him, but the philosopher had terrible difficulties with the military and resigned from **the** post. He agreed to take it up a second time at the entreaties of the prince, whom he had treated and cured. His follower al-Juzjani chose this precise moment to ask him to compose a commentary on the works of Aristotle. They then embarked on a shattering programme of work at Hamadhan. The day was taken up with politics, so the night was devoted to serious matters. Al-Juzjani read over the pages on physics in the *Kitab al-Shifa'* (*The Book of Healing,* a great summa of philosophy), and another follower read over those of the *Qanun* (medicine). They went on late into the night, then took a break: conversation flowed, some wine was drunk, they played a little music___

On the death of the prince, Avicenna corresponded in secret with the prince of Isfahan, 'Ala' al-Dawlah—an indiscretion which cost him a term of imprisonment during which he composed the first of his mystical romances, the *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan.* He managed to

escape, reached Isfahan, became intimate with the prince, and once more his 'team' took up the same exhausting regime of work as at Hamadhan. In 421/1030—seven years before Avicenna's death—Mas'ud, the son of Mahmud of Ghaznah, seized Isfahan. The shaykh's baggage was plundered. The result was the disappearance of the enormous encyclopaedia which he had entitled *Kitab al-Insaf (The Book of Impartial Judgment,* twenty-eight thousand questions in twenty volumes), in which he tackled the difficulties provoked in reading the philosophers by means of his own personal philosophy, known as 'Oriental philosophy' *(hikmah mashriqiyah).*

All that remains of this encyclopaedia are a few fragments, which either escaped plunder or were reconstructed by the author. Among them are part of the commentary on the *Book of Theology* attributed to Aristotle, the commentary on book *lambda* of the *Metaphysics,* the marginal Notes on the *DeAnima,* and possibly the 'Notebooks' known as the *Logic of the Orientals.* On an expedition against Hamadhan in which Avicenna accompanied his prince, he fell ill, doctored himself too severely, and collapsed at the height of his powers at the age of fifty-seven, in 429/1037 near Hamadhan. He died in a most edifying fashion, as a pious Muslim. The formal commemoration of the millennium of his birth (in April 1954 at Tehran; there was a slight delay, as the year 1370 of the Hijrah actually corresponds to 1950 CE) saw the inauguration of the beautiful mausoleum raised on his tomb at Hamadhan through the efforts of the Society of Iranian National Monuments.

2. When one considers the degree to which Avicenna's life was burdened with events and encumbered by public responsibilities, one marvels at the scope of his work. The bibliography established by Yahya Mahdavi lists 242 titles. His work, which had made such a deep impression on the medieval West and on the Islamic East down to our day, covers the entire field of philosophy and the sciences studied at the time. Avicenna was the realization *par excellence* of the medieval type of the universal man. We owe to him a treatise on Prayer and a commentary on several Surahs of the Quran (see above, I, 1). His work, whose starting-point was the work of al-Farabi, ended by somewhat eclipsing the latter in scope (rather like Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi's work in relation to that of his master Mir Damad, *Magister tertius,* in the sixteenth **and** seventeenth centuries).

We must not forget that this work is contemporary with the great works of Ismaili esotericism (see above, II, B, 1} which are associated with some eminent Iranian names (Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani, d. *ca.* 360/972; Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, d. 408/1017; Mu'ayyadfi al-Din al-Shirazi, d. 470/1077, etc.), and which, we hope, will gradually assume their rightful status in our histories of philosophy. Both Avicenna's father and his brother were Ismailis—he himself alludes in his autobiography to the efforts they made to win him over to the Ismaili *da'wah.* As in the case of al-Farabi, there is undoubtedly an analogy in structure between the Avicennan universe and Ismaili cosmology; yet the philosopher refused to join the brotherhood. Nevertheless, although he shied away from Ismaili Shiism, the reception he was accorded by the Shiite princes of Hamadhan and Isfahan allows us at any rate to infer that he subscribed to Twelver Shiism.

This synchronism enlarges the horizon against which his spiritual physiognomy is outlined. Moreover, in the totality of his work we may sense the complexity of a soul and a doctrine of which only a part was known to the Latin scholastics. This part was what emerged, of course, from his monumental work the *Shifa',* which embraced Logic, metaphysics and physics. But the philosopher's personal undertaking was to culminate, as we saw above, in what he designated as being necessarily an 'Oriental philosophy'.

3. As we are obliged to limit ourselves here to the briefest of surveys, the centre of our perspective will be Avicenna's theory of knowledge. This theory, which derives from a general theory of the hierarchical Intelligences, takes the form of an angelology, which both lays the foundations of cosmology and defines the place of anthropology. We saw above {V, 2) that the metaphysics of essence originated in the work of al-Farabi and, with it, the division of being into being which is necessarily being of itself, and being which is necessarily so through another. The Avicennan universe in its turn does not contain what is known as the contingency of the possible. If the possible remains potential, it is because it is unable to be. If a possibility is actualized in being, it is because its existence is made necessary by its cause. Hence it cannot not be. Its cause in turn is necessitated by its own cause, and so on.

It follows that the 'orthodox' idea of the Creation is also obliged to undergo a fundamental change. There can be no question of a

voluntary *coup d'etat* in pre-eternity—there can only be a question of divine necessity. The Creation consists in the very act of divine thought thinking itself; and the knowledge that the divine Being has eternally of himself is no other than the First Emanation, the First *nous* or First Intelligence. This first, unique effect of creative energy, which is identified with divine thought, ensures the transition from Unity to Multiplicity, and also satisfies the principle that from the One only the One can proceed.

In the wake of this First Intelligence, the plurality of being proceeds—exactly as in al-Farabi's system—from a series of acts of contemplation which in some sense turn cosmology into a phenomenology of angelic awareness or consciousness. The First Intelligence contemplates its Principle; it contemplates its Principle which makes its own being necessary; it contemplates the pure possibility of its own being in itself, considered fictively as outside its Principle. From its first contemplation proceeds the Second Intelligence; from the second contemplation proceeds the moving soul of the first Heaven (the Sphere of Spheres); from the third contemplation proceeds the etheric, supra-elemental body of this first Heaven—a body which proceeds, therefore, from the inferior dimension, the dimension of *shadow* or non-being, of the First Intelligence. This triple contemplation, which is the origination of being, is repeated from Intelligence to Intelligence, until the double hierarchy is complete: that is to say, the hierarchy of the Ten Cherubic Intelligences *(karubiyun, angeli intellectuales),* and the hierarchy of the celestial Souls *(angeli caelestes).* These Souls do not possess any faculties of sense, but they do possess Imagination in its pure state, that is to say liberated from the senses; and their aspiring desire for the Intelligence from which they proceed communicates to each Heaven its own motion. The cosmic revolutions in which all motion originates are thus the result of an aspiration of love which remains forever unassuaged. It was this theory of the celestial Souls, and consequently the theory of an imagination which is independent of the corporeal senses, that Averroes (see below, VIII, 6) so vehemently rejected. On the other hand, it flourished among the Iranian followers of Avicenna; we explained earlier (II, 5) how and why prophetic gnosiology had postulated the idea of a purely spiritual Imagination.

4. The Tenth Intelligence no longer has the strength to produce in its

turn another unique Intelligence and another unique Soul. Following this Intelligence, Emanation explodes, as it were, into the multitude of human beings, while from its dimension of shadow proceeds sublunary matter. This Tenth Intelligence is designated the acting or active Intelligence *(al- 'aql al-fa' 'al);* from it our souls emanate, and its illumination *(ishraq)* projects the ideas or forms of knowledge into those souls which have acquired the ability to turn towards it. The human intellect has neither the role nor the power to abstract the intelligible from the sensible. All knowledge and all recollection are an emanation and an illumination which come from the Angel. Moreover, the human intellect itself possesses the nature of the potential angel. It is dual in structure {practical intellect and contemplative intellect), and its two 'aspects' are known as 'terrestrial angels'. Herein lies the secret of the soul's destiny. Of the four states of the contemplative intellect, the one which corresponds to intimacy with the Angel who is the active or acting Intelligence is called the 'holy intellect' *(al- 'aql al-qudsi).* At its height, it attains the privileged status of the spirit of prophecy.

We may guess from all this that when it comes to the question of the *nous poietikos (intelligentia agens),* on which the interpreters of Aristotle have been divided from the beginning, Avicenna, following al-Farabi {and at this point we should also recall the Tenth Intelligence of the Ismaili cosmogony) and contrary to Themistius and St. Thomas Aquinas, opted for an Intelligence which is separate from and extrinsic to the human intellect; yet at the same time he does not identify it with the concept of God, as did Alexander of Aphrodisias and the Augustinians. Al-Farabi and Avicenna regarded this Intelligence as a being in the Pleroma, and as linking man directly to the Pleroma. Hereby these philosophers demonstrated their gnostic originality. On the other hand, they were not content with the Peripatetic notion of the soul as the form (entelechy) of an organic body: this 'information' is only one of the soul's functions, and not even the most important of them. Their anthropology is neo-Platonic.

5. Given this basis, we can understand how the project of 'Oriental philosophy' is a harmonious articulation of the pre-established system. Unfortunately all that remains of this 'Oriental philosophy' are the outlines and hints mentioned above. {We will not go into the detail of certain controversies. The paper by S. Pines cited *in fine* in our

Bibliography has shown decisively that Avicenna's use of the word 'Orientals' always posesses the same meaning.) The most accurate idea one can form of it is to be gleaned, on the one hand, from the *Notes* written in the margin of the *Theology* attributed to Aristotle. Out of six references made by Avicenna to his 'Oriental philosophy', five relate to existence *post mortem.* This doctrine of survival would have been the most essential feature of 'Oriental philosophy'.

On the other hand, there is the trilogy of the Mystical Recitals or Romances to which Avicenna confided the secret of his personal experience. In so doing, he offers us the rare example of a philosopher taking perfect cognizance of himself and who—like al-Suhrawardi later—comes at length to fashion his own symbols. The theme of all three Recitals is the journey towards a mystical *Orient*, an Orient which is not to be found on our maps, but the idea of which is already present in gnosis. The *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan* {*Vivens filius Vigilantis*, he who keeps watch; *cf.* the *Egregoroi* in the books of Enoch) describes the invitation to travel in the company of the Angel who illuminates. The *Recital of the Bird* completes the journey, and inaugurates a cycle which reached its peak in the marvellous Persian mystical epic by Farid al-Din 'Attar in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Finally, *Salaman and Absal are* the two heroes of the Recital evoked in the last section of the *Book of Instructions (Isharat).* These are not allegories but symbolic recitals, and it is important not to confuse the two *{cf.* above, I, 1). They are not stories about theoretical truths which could always be expressed differently; they are figures which typify an intimate personal drama, the apprenticeship of an entire lifetime. The symbol is both key and silence; it speaks and it does not speak. It can never be explained once and for all. It expands to the degree that each consciousness is progressively summoned by it to unfold—that is to say, to the degree that each consciousness makes the symbol the key to its own transmutation.

6. The figure and role of the Angel who is the 'active Intelligence' enable us to understand the subsequent fate of Avicennism. It was because of this Intelligence that what has been called 'Latin Avicennism' was brought to a halt. Orthodox monotheism was alarmed by it, since it was fully aware that far from being immobilized and directed by this Angel to a metaphysically inferior goal, the philosopher would be carried away by it to an unforeseen beyond, and certainly beyond

established dogma; for an immediate and personal relationship with a spiritual being from the Pleroma was unlikely to predispose a philosopher to bow before the Magisterium here below. Avicennism flourished only at the price of a radical alteration in its structure and meaning (the' Augustinian Avicennism' so well described and analysed by Etienne Gilson). The effects of Avicennism should be followed up in the direction of Albert the Great, of his follower Ulrich of Strasburg, and of the precursors of the Rhineland mystics.

Nevertheless, whereas the tide of Averroism was to submerge the effects of Avicennism in Christianity, quite a different fate awaited it in the East. There Averroism was unknown, and al-Ghazali' s critique was not seen as having the same fatal significance often accorded to it by our historians of philosophy. Avicenna's immediate followers were of the highest standing. There was, first and foremost, the faithful al-Juzjani, who wrote a Persian version and commentary on the *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan;* Husayn ibn Zayla of Isfahan (d. 440/1048), who wrote a commentary on it in Arabic; a good Zoroastrian with a typically Iranian name, Bahmanyar ibn al-Marzuban, whose important work remains unedited. But it can be said without paradox that Avicenna's successor was al-Suhrawardi: not in the sense that his books incorporate certain elements of Avicenna's metaphysics, but in the sense that he in turn took upon himself the project of 'Oriental philosophy'—a project which, according to him, Avicenna could never have completed, because he was ignorant of the true 'oriental sources'. Al-Suhrawardi was able to complete it by reviving the philosophy or theosophy of Light of ancient Persia (see below, VII).

This Suhrawardian Avicennism flowered magnificently with the School of Isfahan after the sixteenth century, with results that are still alive in Shiite Iran today. At the beginning of this chapter we mentioned some of the great names which have been sadly absent from our histories of philosophy till now. We should add that Sayyid Ahmad al-'Alawi, the pupil and son-in-law of Mir Damad (d. 1040/1631) wrote a commentary on the *Shifa',* which assumed the proportions of a personal work as vast as the *Shifa'* itself. He entitled it *The Key to the Shifa',* and in it he makes express reference to the 'Oriental philosophy' mentioned by Avicenna at the start of his book.

While philosophical thought slumbered everywhere else in the Islamic world, these masters of Iranian Avicennism conducted Shiite

Islam to its highest point of philosophic awareness. In contrast to the fate of Latin Avicennism, the identification of the Angel of Revelation who is the Holy Spirit with the active Intelligence who is the Angel of Knowledge inspired a philosophy of the Spirit profoundly different from the philosophy which goes by the same name in the West. In order to grasp the significance of this difference we must go back to the options to which we drew attention earlier. The very last pages of the *Shifa'*—in which Avicenna, with a deliberate density of allusion, speaks of the concept of the Prophet and the Imam—did indeed arrest the attention of our thinkers; for these pages enabled them to conclude that Avicenna's gnosiology, his doctrine of the Intelligence, contained the premisses of their own prophetic philosophy.

5. IBN MASKUYAH, IBN FATIK, IBN HINDU

1. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Maskuyah, contemporary of al-Biruni and Avicenna, was born at Rayy and died in Isfahan in 421/1030. According to Mir Damad and Nur Allah al-Shushtari, it seems that the conversion of his family to Islam went back no further than his grandfather Maskuyah (the ending of this name, like that of Ibn Babuyah and Sibuyah, represents the Persian form of the middle-Iranian names ending in-oe. The Arabs vocalize it as Miskawayh). He is an example of the type of Iranian philosopher of Mazdean descent, with a particular leaning towards the study of customs and civilizations, sentences and maxims of wisdom—a literary genre which is so well-represented in Pahlavi. Ahmad-i Maskuyah, as he is commonly known in Persian, spent part of his youth as librarian to Ibn al-'Amid, the vizir to whom we have already alluded (see above, V, 3), and then became the *famulus* and treasurer of the Daylamid sovereign 'Ala al-Dawlah (for whom he wrote one of his Persian treatises). Everything points to his being Shiite: his admission into the Daylamid circle, Nasir Tusi's praise of him, and finally certain passage in his books.

Of the twenty or so works of his which have come down to us, we will name only the most famous. There is his treatise on moral philosophy, *On the Reforming of Customs* (*Tahdhib al-akhlaq),* which has been through several editions in Cairo and Tehran; it is praised by Nasir Tusi in the introduction to his own work on moral philosophy in Persian *(Akhlaq-i Nasiri).* There is the work with characteristic Persian title of *Javidan Kharad* (eternal wisdom). A legend concerning

it has become traditional. A treatise with this title was said to have been written by king Hushang, one of the legendary kings of ancient Iranian history, or by some sage of his period. This work was discovered at the time of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun, and partially translated into Arabic by Hasan ibn Sahl al-Nawbakhti. In his turn, Maskuyah revised and expanded the Arabic work, and also produced a Persian version. However that may be, it is his Arabic text, with the title *Eternal Wisdom (al-Hikmah al-khalidah,* ed. 'A. Badawi, Cairo) that Maskuyah uses as the introduction to his great work on the experience of nations, which encompasses the civilization of the Arabs, the Persians and the Indians.

2. This book of 'eternal wisdom', which recounts the sayings of many philosophers, is related to a whole body of contemporary literature to which we can only refer in passing. Abu al-Wafa' Mubashshir ibn Fatik (fifth/eleventh century), a follower of Ibn al-Haytham, (see above, IV, 8) was an Arab who, although originally from Damascus, settled in Egypt, compiled a very important anthology *(Mukhtar al-hikam)* of 'words of wisdom' attributed to the sages of antiquity, whose more or less legendary biographies he relates. According to his recent editor, 'A. Badawi, he may have had access to a source deriving from the *Lives of the Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertes. (Ibn Fatik's work was translated into Spanish and Latin, and into French by Guillaume de Thignonville, d. 1414 CE, who worked from the Latin version. There was also a partial tanslation of it into Provencal, and two versions in English.) At any rate, it was extensively used, first by al-Shahrastani (d. 547/1153) in his great history of religions and doctrines, in connnection with the section on the ancient philosophers; and later by al-Shahrazuri (d. *ca.* 680/1281), the follower and commentator of al-Suhrawardi (see below, VII, 5), who quoted large excerpts from it. In this way we can trace the tradition of the Greek doxographers in Islam down to Qutb al-Din Ashkevari, a follower of Mr Damad in his *Mahbub al-qulub.*

3. Here mention should also be made of 'Ali ibn Hindu, also a native Rayy, who died in 420/1029, and was another contemporary and compatriot of Maskuyah. He too complied an anthology of spiritual sentences by the Greek sages. In connection with this, it is worth mentioning, by way of anticipation, the great *History of the Philosophersby* Jamal al-Din ibn al-Qifti (d. 646/1248).

6. ABU AL-BARAKAT AL-BAGHDADI

1. Hibat Allah 'Ali ibn Malka Abu al-Barakat al-Baghdadi, an original and attractive personality whose work has been studied in detail by S. Pines, lived to an advanced age (eighty or ninety years), and died shortly after 560/1164. He was of Jewish origin, and converted late in life to Islam for reasons which are somewhat complex, seeing that Muslim biographers give four different versions of his conversion. He is also referred to in a Hebrew text by the name Nathanael, which etymologically is the exact equivalent of Hibat Allah, *Adeodatus,* God-given. His sobriquet *Awhad al-zaman,* 'the unique in his time', is sufficient evidence of his reputation. He is the *example par excellence* of the type of personal philosopher (he has more than one thing in common with Ibn Bajjah; see below, VIII, 3) for whom the idea of meddling in 'polities', in 'social' matters, contradicts the very concept of the philosopher. Official conflicts, such as that between religion and philosophy, as officially understood, interest him not at all. For if the philosopher were to get mixed up in them, how could he be a 'revolutionary'?

We are not, therefore, dealing with an occasional attitude—a withdrawal motivated, say, by the afflictions of the times—but with a fundamental attitude revealed clearly enough in Abu al-Barakat's concept of the history of philosophy. He stated that the philosopher-sages of antiquity only taught orally, for fear lest their doctrines should reach people incapable of understanding them. Only later were they written down, but in a cryptic and symbolic language (a similar idea is to be found in al-Suhrawardi). The history of philosophy is thus reduced to a process of corruption and misinterpretation of the ancient tradition, and this degradation has continued up to the time of Abu al-Barakat. Thus when he says—with some slight exaggeration—that he owes few things to his reading of the philosophers, and that he owes what is essential to his own personal meditations, his intention is not to devalue tradition, but on the contrary to restore its purity. For this reason, he says, although he has read the philosophers' books, he has also read the great 'book of being', and he has come to prefer the doctrines suggested by the latter to those of traditional philosophy.

Our philosopher is therefore perfectly aware that he is elaborating doctrines which are independent of the tradition of the philosophers, since they are the fruit of his own explorations. This is why S. Pines

has given so apt a translation of the title of his main philosophical work, *Kitab al-Mu'tabar.* 'The book of that which is established through personal reflection'. This great work originated in personal notes accumulated in the course of a long lifetime; the philosopher refused to turn them into a book for fear that unqualified readers would not understand them. In the end they came to constitute a veritable summa of scientific knowledge in three volumes, embracing Logic, Physics and Metaphysics (ed. Hyderabad 1357-58 AH). There is no doubt that the new and sometimes revolutionary ideas that it contains are the result of his meditations. The author does, however, speak of the meditations of others, such as those found in certain pages of Avicenna's *Shifa,* doubtless because he found them to be in accordance with what he had read in the 'book of being'.

2. It is because we have laid such emphasis on Avicenna's doctrine of the active Intelligence (see above) that we will now stress the attitude adopted by Abu al-Barakat towards this doctrine, for it is a reflection of his uncompromising 'personalism'. It also frees philosophy once and for all from the difficulties which arise both when one single Intelligence is postulated for humankind, and when a collective magisterium, whether sacred or profane, is substituted for each man's direct relationship with this transcendent but unique Intelligence. The roots of the problem, for Abu al-Barakat, go back to the question of knowing whether human souls together form a single identical species, or else whether every soul is essentially different in kind from every other, or whether souls are grouped together by spiritual families, which constitute so many different species in relation to a common genus. In opposition to philosophers who support the first hypothesis, and in the absence of a clearly attested opinion favouring the second, Abu al-Barakat opts for the third hypothesis. But how then is one to admit that one sole active Intelligence is the unique 'existentializing' cause of the multitude of souls? Since there are *several species* of human soul, the unfolding of this plurality postulates the cooperation of all the celestial hierarchies.

Furthermore, we must distinguish an *existentializing* cause and a *perfecting* cause which are different from each other, as the spiritual teacher *(mu'allim)* is different from the fleshly father. Because of their specific diversity, the spiritual teaching required by the souls cannot be limited to one single form or to one single active Intelligence. This

is why the ancient Sages affirmed that for each individual soul, or perhaps for several souls at once possessing the same nature and affinity, there is a being in the spiritual world who throughout then-existence evinces towards this soul or group of souls a special solicitude and tenderness, a being who initiates them into knowledge, who guides them and consoles them. This friend and guide was known as 'Perfect Nature' *(al-tiba' al-tamm);* in religious parlance, he is called the 'Angel'.

3. The appearance at this point of this figure from Hermeticism is extraordinarily interesting. We have already described {IV, 1) the role of Perfect Nature as the personal Angel and *Alter ego* of light, above all in the Sabian texts, and in al-Suhrawardi and the *ishraqiyun,* all meditating in turn on the ecstatic experience during which Hermes saw the vision of his 'Perfect Nature'. Our conclusion is that by means of this Perfect Nature Abu al-Barakat resolves the problems presented by Avicenna's doctrine of the active Intelligence in a manner which undoubtedly marks a turning-point in the history of philosophy; for as a 'personalist' philosopher he thus makes explicit the process of *individuation* implied in Avicenna's theory itself. The innovatory boldness of this step can be gauged by the fact that in the medieval West opposition to 'Latin Avicennism' was inspired in particular by fear of the 'individualistic' consequences of its angelology. For Abu al-Barakat, there is indeed and active intellect for each human being (as there is for St Thomas Aquinas), but this intellect is 'separate'—that is to say, it is transcendent; it is not just a faculty immanent in terrestrial individuality. It therefore bestows on the individual as such a 'transcendent' dimension, which is superior to all the norms and collective authorities on the level of this world. This is the sense in which Abu tl-Barakat can be termed 'revolutionary'.

We may note that he continued to write long after al-Ghazali died. This fact in itself is sufficient evidence that it would be more than exaggeration to believe that al-Ghazali's critique spelled ruin for the destiny of philosophy in Islam.

7. ABU HAMID AL-GHAZALI AND THE CRITIQUE OF PHILOSOPHY

1. While being on guard against certain exaggerations, one may freely admit that this Khurasfinian was one of the most powerful personalities

and possessed one of the best organized minds that Islam has ever known, as is evidenced by his honorary title, shared with a few others, *of Hujjat al-Islam:* the proof or guarantor of Islam. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali was born in 450/1059 in Ghazalah, a village on the outskirts of Tus (the home of the poet Firdawsi) in Khurasan. He and his brother, who is discussed later in connection with Sufism {VI, 4), lost their father when they were still young children. But before his death, he had consigned them to the guardianship of a friend, a Sufi sage, at whose hand they received their first education. Later the young Abu Hamid went to Nishapur in Khurasan, then one of the most important intellectual centres in the Islamic world. Here he became acquainted with the master of the Ash'arite school of the time, Imam al-Haramayn, and became his follower (c/ above, HI, 3).

On the death of al-Haramayn in 478/1085, he made contact with the famous Saljuq vizir Nizam al-Mulk, the founder of Baghdad university *(al-Madrasah al-Nizamiyah),* where al-Ghazali was appointed professor in 484/1091. This period marks a decisive stage in his life, for the university provided him with a milieu favourable to the expansion and radiance of his personality, and he was able to deepen his knowledge of philosophy. Two works belong to this period of his life. There is, first, the book on 'The Intentions of the Philosophers' *(Maqasid al-falasifah),* which had such a curious fate in the West. It was translated into Latin in 1145 CE at Toledo, by Dominicus Gundissalinus, with the title *Logica et philosophia Algazelis Arabis,* but without the introduction and conclusion in which al-Ghazali stated his aim, which was to describe the doctrines of the philosophers in order to refute them. The work was taken by our Latin Scholastics as evidence that al-Ghazali was a philosophical colleague of al-Farabi and Avicenna, and he was included in the polemic against the 'Arab' philosophers.

The other work from the same period is the famous and violent attack against the philosophers, about which we shall be speaking; but now that we know a little more about the continuity of philosophical and spiritual thought in Islam, it appears ludicrous to say of this critique, as was said in the last century, that it dealt philosophy in the Islamic East a blow from which it was unable to recover. Great astonishment is expressed when, for example, one describes to certain Iranian shaykhs the importance which Western historians have accorded to

al-Ghazali's critique of philosophy. Al-Suhrawardi, Haydar Amuli, Mir Damad and others would have been equally astonished.

His thirty-sixth year was a decisive turning-point in al-Ghazal's life. At this time the problem of intellectual certainty presented itself to his conscience in a form so acute that it brought on a severe inner crisis, which completely disrupted his professional activity and his family life. In 488/1095 he abandoned the university and his family, sacrificing everything to the quest for inner certainty, the guarantee of Truth. We can imagine the shock caused by al-Ghazali's decision—after all, he was then rector of the *Nizamiyah* university and mouthpiece of the Ash'arite doctrine, identified at that time with the orthodoxy itself of Sunni Islam; and it reveals in al-Ghazali the strength of an exceptional personality.

He left Baghdad and set out on the narrow way which leads to certainty. For ten years, clothed in the garb of a Sufi, he went on his solitary pilgrimage through the Muslim world. His travels took him to Damascus and Jerusalem (before it was captured by the Crusaders), Alexandria and Cairo, Mecca and Medina, and he devoted all his time to the spiritual practices of the Sufis. When he had overcome the crisis and annulled his doubts he returned to his native land, taught for a few more years at Nishapur, and died at Tus in 505/1111 on the 19th December, at the age of fifty-two—younger even than Avicenna.

2. Al-Ghazali thus confronted the problem of knowledge and of personal certitude to its fullest extent. But was he alone, among all the Muslim thinkers, in searching for experiential certainty in inner knowledge? This is an essential theme in al-Suhrawardi, who seems to have known almost nothing at all about al-Ghazali, and Avicenna and Abu al-Barakat had already faced the problem of self-awareness and its implications. As for knowledge of the *heart,* it had been admirably formulated, as we now know, by the Imams of Shiism.

Yet what makes this quest of al-Ghazali's so moving is the drama into which it precipitated his life. When he speaks about true knowledge, what he says rings with the authenticity of personal testimony. In his *al-Munqidh Min al-dalal* ("The Preservation from Error') he writes: 'True knowledge is the knowledge through which the known object is utterly disclosed (to the spirit), in such a manner that no doubt can exist with regard to it, and no error can tarnish it. It is the level at which the *heart* cannot admit or even conceive of doubt. Any

knowledge which has not attained this level of certitude is incomplete and susceptible to error.' In another place *{Risalat al-laduniyah),* he describes this unveiling as 'the direct seizure by the thinking soul of the essential reality of things, stripped of their material form— As for the object of knowledge, it is the very essence of things reflected in the mirror of the soul... .The thinking soul is the focus of the radiance of the universal Soul. From this Soul it receives the intelligible forms. It contains all knowledge in a potential state, as the seed contains all the possibilities of the plant and its state of being.'

This is excellent positive philosophy, and all philosophers, especially an *ishraqi,* would freely acknowledge its merit and validity. Unfortunately, it does not work both ways. Al-Ghazali's negative attitude towards philosophers achieves a violence which is astonishing in so elevated a soul. No doubt the polemical aspect of his work reveals his inner torment. This polemic takes up no less than four works, in which he turns successively against the Ismailis, the Christians, the so-called free-thinkers, and finally the philosophers. And what is even more astonishing is the degree to which al-Ghazali relies on logic and rational dialectic in order to achieve his polemical purpose, when elsewhere he is so utterly convinced of their inability to attain the truth!

3. The idea which motivates the book attacking the Ismailis (the 'Batinians', or esotericists) appears to involve rather too closely questions of power—that is, the concerns of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mustazhir, who was anxious to ensure the legitimacy of his position against all Fatimid pretenders (hence the title *Kitab al-Mustazhiri).* The work was partially edited and analysed by I. Goldziher in 1916. Since at that date none of the great Ismaili texts, either Arabicor Persian, was yet known, it was easy for the editor to be fully in agreement with al-Ghazali. The situation today is different.

One is struck by al-Ghazali's bitterly *dialectical* attack against a type of thinking which is essentially *hermeneutic.* The process of the Ismaili *ta'wil,* or esoteric exegesis, escapes him, as does the concept of a knowledge which is transmitted *{tradita)* like a spiritual heritage (*'ilm irthi)* to its heirs. He insists on seeing only a 'religion of authority' in what is actually an *initiation* into a doctrine *(ta'lim),* into a hidden meaning which is neither constructed nor demonstrated by means of syllogisms, and which requires an inspired Guide, who is the Imam (see above, II). He fails to grasp both the actual meaning of the Shiite

Imamate, and what it is that conditions 'spiritual birth' *{wiladah ruhaniyah),* with its metaphysical basis. We referred above to the texts of the Shiite Imams on the knowledge of the *heart,* which would have satisfied al-Ghazali had he known them. His book simply illustrates the idea that an orthodox Sunni theologian may possess of esotericism. The entire question, moreover, needs to be reconsidered, for we now know of the existence of a massive Ismaili response to al-Ghazali's attacks. This was the work of the fifth Yemeni *Da'i,* Sayyid-na 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Walid (d. 612/1215); it is entitled *Damigh al-batil,* "The book which annihilates falsehood', and consists of two manuscript volumes of one thousand five hundred pages. We may rest assured that a comparative study of the two texts will be extremely interesting.

The polemical book against the Christians is meant to be a 'courteous refutation *(radd jamil)* of the divinity of Jesus', in which the writer relies for support on the explicit statements of the Gospels. Strangely enough, al-Ghazali is less emphatic about the demand for unitarianism *{tawhid)* and the danger of anthropomorphism *{tashbih)* than about the affirmation of his method, which consists, equally curiously, in taking only science and reason as guides in the interpretation of the evangelical texts. This is, no doubt, an 'evangelical' protest against the dogmas of the Church; but the results of it should be compared with the completely different effect produced by the Christology which penetrated, without any polemic, other spiritual movements in Islam: Ismailism, al-Suhrawardi, Ibn al-'Arabi, al-Simnani and so on. We have already referred to the way that this Christology links up with Islamic gnosis and to how, when allied to gnosis pure and simple, it differs for all that from the official dogmas which are the object of al-Ghazali's attack. In short, this is a Christology which penetrates into 'prophetic philosophy' by extending, as we saw, the idea of the *Verus Propheta* to the 'Seal of the prophets' and to the cycle of the *walayah* after him.

Another polemical book, written this time in Persian—probably after al-Ghazali's return to Nishapur—takes issue with the 'freethinkers' *ibahiyah)*—a very wide category which includes the anomian or non-conformist Sufis, errant philosophers, and 'heretics' of all descriptions. It could be said that the people who come under this heading here correspond to the so-called *Schwarmer* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Germany, the 'Enthusiasts'. Here again those

that Avicennans have existed down to our day. The great works which came out of the school of Isfahan prove that there is no question of a 'philosophy of compromise', and even less of the 'works of epitomists'. It is indeed a question of that 'prophetic philosophy' which we described at the beginning of this study, and which was revived in sixteenth century Iran. This revival enables us to understand the reasons why, given the fate of al-Ghazali's critique, the true destiny of original philosophy in Islam—the philosophy which could arise only in Islam—was fulfilled in a Shiite milieu.

After al-Ghazali, it was al-Shahrastani (d. 547/1153) who, like a good *mutakallim,* renewed the attack against the Hellenizing philosophers, especially Avicenna. This he did both in his admirable history of religions *(Kitab al-Milal)* and in a book, as yet unedited, against the philosophers *(Masari' al-falasifah),* as well as in his treatise on dogma *(Nihayat al-Iqdam).* He provoked a monumental response from the great Shiite philosopher Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 672/1274), who defended Avicenna.

In fact, it was not the *Tahafut* that was influential, but rather al-Ghazali's great work 'On the Restoration (or revival) of the Religious Sciences' *(Ihya' 'ulum al-din),* a work rich in analyses, such as that on musical audition (the *sama')* which reveal a profound spiritual intelligence. Certain Shiite authors have no hesitation in quoting it. Muhsin Fayd, the most famous pupil of Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi, went as far as rewriting the entire work in order to make it conform to the Shiite spirit (he entitled it *al-Mahajjat al-baydah).* The speculative and spiritual life of the following centuries, especially in Iran, was to bear the stamp, not of al-Ghazali's critique of philosophers, but of another revival or restoration, undertaken by al-Suhrawardi. There would not longer be the dilemma of whether to be a philosopher or a Sufi. One cannot properly be the one without being the other. This produces a type of spiritual man of whom philosophy demands what it has perhaps never demanded anywhere else. This is why we must say something about the teaching of some of the greatest of the Sufis, and about the nature of the spiritual restoration that al-Suhrawardi desired.

VI. Sufism

1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

1. According to the generally accepted etymology, the word *sufi* derives from the Arabic *suf,* meaning wool, in allusion to the distinctive Sufi custom of wearing garments and a cloak of white wool (the *khirqah).* Etymologically, therefore, the word contains no apparent reference to the spiritual doctrine which distinguishes the Sufis in Islam, and its usage is no less secular. The term *guffs* designates the body of mystics and spiritual men who profess the *tasawwuf.* The word *tasawwuf is* the verbal noun of the fifth form derived from the root *swf;* it means to make a profession of Sufism, and is used when speaking of Sufism pure and simple *(cf.* the words *tashayyu',* to make a profession of Shiism; *tasannun,* to make a profession of Sunnism, and so on). Another explanation of the word, and at first sight a more satisfactory one is that it transcribes the Greek *sophos,* meaning sage. Although Orientalists in general do not accept this explanation, al-Biruni in the fourth/tenth century (see above, IV, 6) made a case for it *(cf.* the word *faylasuf,* which is a transcription of the Greek *philosophos,* although in the one Arab word there is a *sad,* in the other a *sin).* However that may be, we should bear in mind the extraordinary skill with which Arabic grammarians in general could discover a Semitic etymology for any word imported from outside.

2. As evidence of mystical religion in Islam, Sufism is a spiritual phenomenon of tremendous importance. Essentially, it is the realization of the Prophet's spiritual message, the attempt to live the modalities of this message in a personal way through the interiorization of the content of the Quranic Revelation. The *mi'raj* or 'ecstatic assumption', during which the Prophet was initiated into the divine secrets, remains the prototype of the experience which each Sufi in turn attempts to recapture for himself. Sufism is a resounding affirma-

tion, an irremissible testimony on the part of spiritual Islam against any tendency to reduce Islam to a legalistic and literalist religion. It was induced to develop a detailed technique of spiritual ascesis, whose stages, progress and aims require the existence of an entire metaphysical system which goes by the name of *'irfan.* The polarity of *shari'ah* and *haqiqah*—or, to put it more fully, the triad formed by the *shari'ah* (the literal fact of the Revelation), the *tariqah* {the mystical way), and the *haqiqah* (spiritual truth as personal realization)—is thus essential to its life and doctrine.

This explains, on the one hand, all the difficulties that Sufism has had to face over the centuries from official Islam. On the other hand, it begs an answer to the question of whether the polarity of *shari'ah* and *haqiqah,* which is attained by way of the *tariqah,* is actually an innovation belonging to Sufism, or whether it is not an essential component of an Islam which, although it may not bear the name of Sufism, is nevertheless spiritual Islam. The references below to the doctrine of some of the great masters of Sufism bring us face to face with the basic positions adopted by Shiism and its 'prophetic philosophy' . This conclusion gives rise to a question of capital importance, one which can be correctly formulated only when we have acquired a deeper knowledge of the spiritual world of Shiism; for the 'phenomenon of Sufism' in some measure differs according to whether it is lived in Shiite Iran or whether it is lived in Sunni Islam, the Islam with which orientalists until now have been most familiar.

Unfortunately, we cannot go into this problem here, still less find a solution to it; but we can at least establish certain factors in order to define an extremely complex situation. It might appear, from the themes grouped in chapter II above under the heading of 'prophetic philosophy', that Sufism came into being spontaneously. This would be true as far as Shiite Sufism is concerned. (All the labours of Haydar Amuli, and his influence down to our day, point to this conclusion, and we drew atttention above [II B II 4] to the phenomenon of the *union* of Ismailism with Sufism.) But in fact, and numerically over the centuries, the great majority of Sufis are to be found in the Sunni world. Furthermore, in the Shiite world we frequently observe a reticence with respect to Sufism which borders on censure—and this not only on the part of the official Mullahs, the representatives of the legalistic religion, but also on the part of spiritual personalities who derive their

doctrine from the teaching of the Imams and who, even though they use the vocabulary of Sufism and profess the same theosophical metaphysic, yet make no profession of Sufism and have great reservations about it. This type of Shiite spirituality, still wholly alive in our own day, confronts us with the question which there is no way of evading.

3. Let us begin with the pertinent fact that the name 'Sufis' was first applied to the members of a group of Shiite spirituals of Kufah, between the second and third centuries of the Hijrah. Among them was a certain 'Abdak, as a text by 'Ayn al-Quda al-Hamadhani (d. 525/1131) informs us: 'The pilgrims on the way of God in preceding epochs and during the first generations were not distinguished by the name of Sufism *(tasawwuf). Sufi* is a word which became current only in the third century (twelfth century CE), and the first person to be known by this name in Baghdad was 'Abdak the Sufi (d. 210/825).' 'Abdak, we are told, was a great shaykh prior to al-Junayd and to al-Junayd's master, Sari al-Saqati (see below, VI, 2). This in no way alters the fact that, as we know, the eighth Imam, 'Ali al-Rida (d. 203/818) with whom 'Abdak was contemporary, was severe in his comments about Sufism, and that after the end of the third/ninth century all traces of Shiite Sufism seem to vanish until the appearance, in the seventh/ thirteenth century, of Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah (d. 650/1252), and of the other masters of Shiite Sufism—Haydar Amuli, Shah Ni'mat Allah al-Wali, and so on—who succeeded each other down to the Safavid Renaissance.

4. Several things are to be observed in connection with this. In the first place, if we concentrate on the notion of the *walayah* which is at the heart of Shiism, and note the change it underwent in Sunni Sufism, in the work of, say, a master such as al-Hakim Tirmidhi (see below, VI, 3), we may conclude that that in itself was already sufficient reason for the censure by the Imams and the Shiites, at least with respect to certain specific Sufi groups. Among the latter, the doctrine of the *walayah* betokens the transition to Sunni Sufism through the elimination of Imamology, even when this resulted in an Imamology without an Imam, something which is equivalent to the paradox of a Christology without Christ:

It cannot be said that the Imams' condemnation of these groups

brought about the complete disappearance of Shiite Sufism, for there are two facts to be taken into account. One is the overt existence of Shiite Sufism from the thirteenth century down to the present day. The other is that the lineage of most of the *turuq* or Sufi congregations starts with one of the Imams. Those who have contested the historical authenticity of these genealogies have failed to perceive that the less 'historical' they are, the more they are evidence of a conscious desire on the part of these congregations to provide themselves with a spiritual ancestry going back to one of the Shiite Imams. There is obviously a reason for this. The temporary disappearance of any visible traces of Shiite Sufism can be sufficiently explained by the coming of the Saljuq power to Baghdad at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century (see above, HI, 3, A), which obliged every Shiite to be strict in his observance of the *taqiyah*, the 'discipline of the arcane', ordained by the Imams themselves. For this reason we must always be extremely cautious in drawing any conclusions.

5. Secondly, we have just alluded afresh to the characteristic type of spiritual Shiite {see above, II, sect. 6) who, without belonging to Sufism, uses the technical vocabulary of a Sufi. Neither al-Suhrawardi, nor Hayder Amuli, nor philosophers such as Mir Damad, Sadra al-Shirazi and a host of others, belonged to a *tariqah* (a word, as we know, which means the 'spiritual way' and which also serves to designate the materialization of this way in a Sufi brotherhood or congregation). It would seem to be the case that it was first and foremost the *congregational* organization of Sufism that the Shiite critics had in mind: the *khanqah* (monastery), the 'monkish' garb, the role of the shaykh who tended to be a substitute for the Imam, especially for the hidden Imam, the inner master and guide, since he is invisible. We must take account of the fact that the relationship with the *shari'ah* as it is lived in Shiism, above all when it represents a minority, is not quite the same as in Sunnism. Shiism is already and of itself the spiritual way, the *tariqah* —that is to say, initiation. Needless to say, a Shiite society is not a society of initiates, for that would contradict the very notion of initiation. But the Shiite milieu is 'virtually' an initiatic one. Through his devotion to the holy Imams, the Shiite is predisposed to receive this initiation from them, and such initiation provides him with a direct and personal link with the spiritual world in its 'vertical dimension' without his having to enter formally into an organized tari*qah*, as is

the case in Sunnism.

In order to grasp this phenomenon comprehensively, we must be aware of all its variants. Parallel to the *turuq* or Sunni brotherhoods, there are Shiite Sufi turuq which possess an external organization. (In present-day Iran, there is that of the Shah-Ni'mat Allah is with its multiple ramifications, that of the Dhahabis, and so on.) But it is equally necessary to mention the many *turuq in* Shiism which have no external organization at all and even no denomination. Their existence is purely spiritual, in the sense that there is a personal initiation which is conferred by a shaykh whose name—if a particular personality is in question—is sometimes preserved, but of whom more usually there is no written record. Finally, there is the case of the *Uwaysis*, whose name derives from the name of the Yemeni Uways al-Qarani, one of the very first Shiites, who knew the Prophet and was known to him although they never met each other. We are therefore talking about those who have not had a human teacher who is external and visible, but who have all received a personal spiritual guide. This is, precisely, the meaning of devotion to the Imams and that to which it predisposes those who are so devoted. Some Uwaysis are known by name; they existed in Sunnism and are innumerable in Shiism.

6. Bearing these observations in mind, we must agree that a history of Sufism in Islam, in its links with the other manifestations of spirituality analysed in the present study, would be a task of formidable complexity. It is of course possible to distinguish the major periods. The pious ascetics of Mesopotamia who took the name of Sufis lead us to what is known as the school of Baghdad; at the same time the school of Khurasan was in existence. The doctrine of the few masters of whom we give some account below already heralds what we shall later be in a position to call 'Sufi metaphysic'. But the great themes which we shall indicate do no more than lead us back to precisely the themes we have come to know in Shiism: the polarity of *shari'ah* and *haqiqah*, *zahir* and *batin,* the idea of the cycle of the *walayah* in hierohistory following on the cycle of prophecy. The idea of the *qutb,* or mystical *pole,* in Sunni Sufism is simply a translation of the Shiite idea of the Imam, and the mystical esoteric hierarchy of which the *pole* is the summit continues in any case to presuppose the idea of the Imam. These are all facts which will make the question confronting us here even **more** crucial when the second part of this study comes

to deal with the later periods of Shiism, and above all with the doctrine and influence of the school of Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 638/1240).

Unfortunately, we are too strictly limited by space here to discuss the features envisaged by some general explanations of Sufism: the influence of neo-Platonism, of gnosis, of Indian mysticism, and so on. We shall not even be able to mention more than a few of the great figures of Sufism. There will be many, therefore, who are absent—that is to say, many Sufi masters who cannot be discussed here, starting with Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-Ansari of Herat (396/1006-481/1088), the nine hundredth anniversary of whose death was celebrated at Kabul in the summer of 1381/1962.

2. ABU YAZID AL-BASTAMI

1. Abu Yazid Tayfur ibn 'Isa ibn Surushan al-Bastami was of very proximate Mazdean descent, for his grandfather Surushan was a Zoroastrian who had converted to Islam. Abu Yazid spent most of his life in his native town of Bastam (not to be confused with Bistam) in north-eastern Iran, and died there around 234/848 or 261/874. He is rightly regarded as one of the greatest mystics to come out of Islam over the centuries. His teaching was the direct expression of his inner life, and it earned him admiring tributes from the most diverse people, even though he assumed neither the activities nor the responsibilities of a spiritual guide or a public preacher. He did not even leave any written work. The essence of his spiritual experience has come down to us in the form of stories, maxims and paradoxes, which were collected by his immediate followers or by some of those who visited him. They form a collection of inestimable spiritual and metaphysical import. These maxims are known in the spiritual history of Islam by the technical name of *shathiyat,* a term which is difficult to translate: it implies the idea of a shock which overturns, and we shall translate it here as 'paradoxes', 'excesses', 'ecstatic utterances'.

2. Among the immediate followers of Abu Yazid al-Bastami, worth particular mention is his nephew Abu Musa 'Isa ibn Adam, his eldest brother's son, for it was through him that al-Junayd, the famous master of Baghdad, came to know Abu Yazid's sayings, translated them into Arabic and accompanied them with a commentary which has been partially preserved in the *Kitab al-Luma'* by al-Sarraj. Among those

who visited him we may mention Abu Musa al-Dabili (from Dabil in Armenia), Abu Ishaq ibn al-Harawi, a follower of Ibn Adham and the famous Iranian Sufi Ahmad ibn Khidruyah, who visited Abu Yazid during the latter's pilgrimage to Mecca. The most complete and important source for the life and sayings of Abu Yazid is, however, the 'Book of Light on the Sayings of Abu Yazid Tayfur' *{Kitab al-Nur fi kalimat Abu Yazid Tayfur),* the work of Muhammad al-Sahlaji (d. 476/1084; ed. 'A. Badawi, Cairo 1949). We should mention in addition the collection of maxims included by Ruzbihan Baqli Shirazi in the great Summa which he devoted to the *shathiyat* of the Sufis in general (an edition of the Persian text is in preparation), and which he accompanied by an exceedingly personal commentary.

3. An essential aspect of the doctrine of this great Iranian Sufi, as it is revealed in his stories and maxims, is a profound awareness of the triple condition of being: in the form of I *(ana'iyah),* the form of You *(antiyah),* and the form of He *{huwiyah,* the ipseity or Self). In this ordering of the awareness of being the divine and the human aspects are united and reciprocate in a transcendent act of adoration and love. Abu Yazid describes the stages on the way to the highest spiritual realization with great vividness. We can cite only one text here by way of example:

> 'I contemplated my Lord with the eye of certitude after He had turned me away from all that is other than Him, and illuminated me with His Light. He then brought me to a knowledge of the marvels of His secret, and revealed to me His ipseity (His Self). I contemplated my I by means of His own ipseity. My light faded under His light, my strength vanished under His strength, my power under His power. Thus I saw my I through His Self. The greatness that I attributed to myself was in reality His greatness; my progression was His progression.
>
> ' After that I contemplated Him with the eye of Truth (*'ayn al-haqq)* and I said to him: Who is he? He answered me: Neither myself nor other than myself... When at last I contemplated the Truth by means of the Truth, I lived the Truth through the Truth and I subsisted in the Truth by means of the Truth in an eternal present, without breath, without word, without hearing, without knowledge, until God had communicated to me a knowledge sprung from

His knowledge, a language that proceeded from His grace, a look modelled on His light.'

3. AL-JUNAYD

1. Al-Junayd (Abu al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn al-Junayd al-Khazzaz) was of Iranian origin and was born at Nihavand. He lived all his life in Iraq—to be precise, in Baghdad—where he died in 297/909. In Baghdad he received the traditional teaching from one of the greatest scholars of the time, Abu Thawr al-Kalbi, and he was initiated into mysticism by his uncle Sari al-Saqati, and by other Sufi masters such as al-Harith al-Muhasibi, Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Qassab, and others. Both during his life and after his death, his influence on Sufism was profound. His personality, sermons and writings put him into the front rank of the Sufism known as the 'school of Baghdad', and he is also called by the title of *Shaykh al Ta'ifah*, the master of a group of Sufis.

About fifteen treatises by al-Junayd have survived, part of them consisting of the correspondence he exchanged with some of the great Sufi among his contemporaries. They contain analyses and statements concerning certain themes of the spiritual life, on the notions of *sidq* (truthfulness), *ikhlas* (sincerity) and *'ibadah* (divine adoration in truth). The actual treatises are developments of one or other of the classic subjects of Islamic spirituality—for example the *Treatise on Divine Unity {Kitab al-Tawhid)*—from the twin points of view of theology and mysticism; the *Book of Mystical Absorption {Kitab al-Fana'),* in which the writer studies the conditions that lead to the state of supra-existence *{baqa');* the *Rules of Conduct for him who cannot do without God(Adab al-muftaqir ila Allah);* the *Medicine of Souls (Dawat al-arwah),* and others.

2. With regard to the teaching of this great master, two points should be made here which bear out the observations above (VI, 1). Firstly, al-Junayd's spirituality is conditioned by the polarity of the *shari'ah* —the letter of the divine Law which changes from prophet to prophet —and the *haqiqah*, the permanent spiritual truth. As we have found elsewhere, it is this which from the very beginning constitutes the religious phenomenon of Shiism, and is the premiss of Shiite Imamology. Al-Junayd is opposed to the extremes of certain Sufi who arrive at the conclusion that since the *haqiqah* is ontologically superior to

the *shari'ah*, the *shari'ah* is useless and must be abrogated as soon as they have passed beyond it and gained access to the *haqiqah.* We have seen elsewhere that Twelver Shiism and Ismailism were divided on this very point. It would be interesting, therefore, to 'rethink' the facts of the spiritual situation, taken in their entirety: the situation does not arise *with* Sufism alone, and it cannot be explained *by* Sufism alone.

A second essential point of al-Junayd's doctrine is revealed in the doctrine of *tawhid* as the basis of the experience of mystical union. It cannot be doubted that al-Junayd made a comprehensive study of this problem, to which he devoted a whole book. For him, *tawhid* consists not simply in demonstrating the Unity of the divine Being by means of rational arguments, in the manner of the theologians of the *kalam*, but rather in living the transcendent Unity of God himself. If this requirement defines an authentic spirituality, it is also a reminder that the sixth Imam told his disciples how he meditated upon the Quranic text until he understood it as he to whom it had been revealed understood it from Him who revealed it.

4. AL-HAKIM AL-TIRMIDHI

1. Al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, or *Termezi* according to the Persian pronunciation (Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Hasan or al-Husayn) lived sometime during the third/ninth century. The exact dates of his birth and death are not known, nor even the broad outlines of the external life of this Iranian from Bactria. Basically everything that is known about him can be reduced to the names of certain of his teachers and to the account of his exile from Tirmidh, his native town. We also know that he continued his studies at Nishapur. On the other hand, al-Tirmidhi left valuable information about his inner life and his spiritual development in an autobiography discovered by Helmut Ritter. Furthermore, he is the author of a large number of treatises, many of which have been preserved *(cf. in fine* Bibliography).

2. Al-Tirmidhi's spiritual doctrine is essentially based on the notion of the *walayah:* divine friendship, intimacy with God, spiritual initiation. This is why the questions raised in our preliminary remarks (see above, VI, sect. 1) assume such urgency here. We know that this notion of the *walayah* is the very foundation of Shiism (see above, II, A),

and that the word, the concept and the thing itself are first found in the texts which record the teaching of the Imams. It seems, therefore, that al-Tirmidhi's w*ork par excellence is* the work, or one of the works, in which we can study the process that gave rise to the paradox of a *walayah* deprived of the Imamology on which it is founded. We will confine ourselves here to two comments.

The first of these is that al-Tirmidhi actually distinguishes two types of *walayah,* one general or common *(walayah 'ammah)* and one particular *[walayah khassah).* He extends the notion of the first *walayah* to all *muslimin:* the pronunciation of the *shahadah,* or Islamic profession of faith, is enough to create the bond of the *walayah* which then becomes the bond with God, common to all believers who accept the prophetic message. With regard to the particular *walayah,* it belongs to a spiritual elite, to those who are intimate with God, who converse and communicate with Him because they are in a state of effective and transcendent union. We should remember that the idea of the dual *walayah* was first propounded and established by Shiite doctrine. As unfortunately we have no room here to make a full comparison, we must refer to the original Shiite context of this dual concept (see above, II, A, 3 ff.). We are forced to conclude that in the Sufism of al-Tirmidhi there is a radical shift of structure, a kind of 'laicization' as it were, of the concept of the 'general walayah'.

Our second observation concerns the relationship between the *walayah* and prophecy *(nubuwah)* in al-Tirmidhi's doctrine. According to him, the walayah encompasses, together with all believers in general, all the prophets as well, because the *walayah* is the source of their inspiration and the foundation of their prophetic mission. He asserts that the *walayah* in itself is superior to prophecy because it is permanent, and is not bound to a moment in time like the prophetic mission. Whereas the cycle of prophecy is historically complete with the coming of the last Prophet, the cycle of the *walayah* remains in existence until the end of time through the presence of the *awliya'.*

This schema, interesting though it may be, has nothing new to teach someone who is conversant with Shiite prophetology, unless it is that without one noticing it, a structure can become unbalanced in default of fuller information. We saw above (ch. II) that the idea that the cycle of the *walayah* succeeds the cycle of prophecy was the very premiss of Shiism and its prophetic philosophy, and that it

presupposes a dual aspect or 'dimension' of the 'eternal prophetic Reality', whose corollary is the interdependence of prophetology and Imamology. Our two observations are related to each other, since in both cases we are drawing attention to an operation which aims at retaining the idea of the *walayah* while at the same time eliminating the *Imamology* which is the *walayah*'s source and foundation. This is a serious problem, one which affects the history of Islamic spirituality in its entirety—and which, moreover, is not a problem at all for Shiite authors.

5. AL-HALLAJ

1. Al-Hallaj is certainly one of the most outstanding and representative characters of Sufism. His name and reputation have broken through the limited circle of the Muslim spiritual elite, so well known was the tragedy of his imprisonment and trial at Baghdad and his subsequent martyrdom as a witness of mystical Islam. Much has been written about him in all the languages of Islam, and his fame has now spread to the West, thanks to the labours of Louis Massignon, who became his editor and interpreter. We will therefore refer to these works, limiting ourselves here to an outline of his biography which is a lesson in itself.

2. Abu 'Abd Allah al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, also the grandson of a Zoroastrian, was born at Tur in the province of Fars in south-western Iran, near the town of Beiza' (al-Bayda'), in 244/857. While he was still very young, he was taught by the famous Sufi Sahl ibn 'Abd Allah al-Tustari, whom he then accompanied into exile to Basrah. In 262/876 al-Hallaj left for Baghdad, where he became the pupil of 'Amr ibn 'Uthman al-Makki, one of the great spiritual masters of the period. He remained with him for about eighteen months, in the course of which he married the daughter of one of his followers. In 264/877 he met al-Junayd (see above, VI, 3), and under the latter's supervision he practised the exercises of the spiritual life. Al-Junayd clothed him with his own hands in the *khirqah,* or Sufi cloak. But in 282/896, on returning from his first pilgrimage to Mecca, al-Hallaj broke off relations with al-Junayd and with most of the Sufi masters of Baghdad. He then went to Tustar in south-west Iran, where he stayed for four years. This period is distinguished by his growing disagreement with **the** traditionalists and the jurists.

Relations became so strained that about four years later al-Hallaj rejected the garb of the Sufi in order to mingle with the people and preach to them of the spiritual life. It is said that he maintained good relations with the famous doctor/philosopher Rhazes (al-Razi, see above, IV, 4), with the 'socialist' reformer Abu Sa'id al-Jannabi, and even with certain official authorities such as prince Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Tawdi. Al-Hallaj travelled all over the provinces of Iran, from Khurasan in the north-east to Khuzistan in the south-west. He practised the spiritual life, paying no heed to established conventions and ceaselessly exhorting the people to lead an inner life. After five years, in 291/903, al-Hallaj made his second pilgrimage to Mecca, and then went further afield: to India, Turkistan, even to the borders of China. He was nicknamed 'the intercessor', and there were many conversions to Islam as a result of his enlightening influence.

3. In 294/906 al-Hallaj went to Mecca for the third time. He remained there for two years, and then returned for good to Baghdad, where he established himself as a public preacher, always choosing themes of great spiritual and metaphysical import. He described his doctrine, affirming that the final goal, not only for the Sufi but for all beings, is union with God, a union realized through Love and requiring an act of divine transformation which brings one's being to its highest state. These lofty ideas soon provoked various kinds of opposition: opposition from the doctors of the Law and from politicians, as well as the reserve of some Sufis.

The canonists censured his doctrine of the mystical union because, they said, it confuses the divine with the human and ends in a type of pantheism. The politicians accused him of sowing seeds of unrest in people's minds and looked on him as an agitator. The Sufis for their part had reservations about him because they held that he was guilty of imprudence when he revealed divine secrets in public to people who were prepared neither to receive nor to understand them. This was also the opinion of the Shiites, and of the esotericists in general, with regard to him: al-Hallaj was guilty of publicly breaking the 'discipline of the arcane'. Finally, the jurists and the politicians intrigued together in order to obtain a *fatwa*—a sentence—against him. They obtained one from the great jurist of Baghdad, Ibn Dawud al-Isfahani, asserting that al-Hallaj's doctrine was false, that it imperilled the dogma of Islam and that it justified his being condemned to death.

4. Twice arrested by the 'Abbasid police, al-Hallaj was imprisoned in 301/913 and summoned to appear before the vizir 'Ali ibn 'Isa. A pious and liberal man, the vizir opposed his execution; but this was no more than a respite. Al-Hallaj was kept in prison for eight years and seven months. Events were precipitated with the coming to power of a new vizir, Hamid ibn al-'Abba, an implacable adversary of al-Hallaj and his followers. Al-Hallaj's enemies returned to the attack and demanded a new *fatwa* condemning him, which was granted to them by Qadi Abu 'Umar ibn Yusuf. This time the sentence was carried out, and al-Hallaj was put to death on the 24th Dhu al-Qa'dah 309—the 27th March 922 CE.

6. AHMAD AL-GHAZALI AND 'PURE LOVE[1]

1. In connection with the first sentence pronounced against al-Hallaj, we mentioned the name of the jurist Ibn Dawud al-Isfahani, and this fact illustrates a profound tragedy of the soul. For Ibn Dawud al-Isfahani, who, as his name suggests, was of Iranian descent (he died in 297/909 at the age of forty-two), was also the author of a book which is both a masterpiece and a summation of the Platonic theory of love in the Arabic language (the *Kitab al-Zuhrah* or 'Book of Venus', a title which can also be read as *Kitab al-Zahrah* or the 'Book of the Flower'}. This is an extended rhapsody, written partly in verse and partly in prose, which celebrates the ideal of Platonic love as typified in *'udri* love. In fact, the author's destiny conformed to the destiny, so often sung by the poets, of an ideal tribe of southern Arabia: the legendary people of the Banu 'Udhrah (the 'virginalists'), a people chosen and chaste above all others, for whom 'to love was to die'. In the course of his long rhapsody, the author summarizes the Platonic myth of the *Symposium*, and concludes: 'It is also reported of Plato that he said: I do not understand what love is, but I know that it is a divine madness *(junun ilahi)* which is neither to be praised nor condemned.'

Al-Hallaj, too, preached the doctrine of love; and yet Ibn Dawud condemned him. In order to understand this tragedy, we must take fully into consideration a situation that existed among the post-Hallajian

mystics, particularly in the case of Ahmad al-Ghazali and Ruzbihan Baqli of Shiraz (d. 606/1209), who was both a 'Platonist' and the interpreter—or rather expander—of al-Hallaj. From then it becomes possible to speak of an ambivalence or ambiguity about this Platonism in Islam, of its two possible situations with respect to prophetic religion, since there are two ways in which it can be understood and lived. There is what might be called the 'theophanism' of Ruzbihan, which is a hermeneutics of the prophetic meaning of Beauty, a *ta'wil that* here too effects the union of the *zahir,* the apparent, with the *batin,* or hidden meaning. For *Ibn Dawud,* who is a *zahiri* or exotericist, this hidden meaning is a closed book. For Ruzbihan, the hidden meaning of the human Form is the primordial theophany: it is God revealing himself to himself in the Adamic form, in the celestial anthropos who was called into being in pre-eternity, and who *is* his own Image. This is why Ruzbihan took particular pleasure in al-Hallaj's famous verses: 'Glory be to Him who manifested His humanity as a mystery of the glory of His radiant divinity', and why he based the bond between human and divine love on this same mystery. Ibn Dawud could not accept this, and was forced to take sides against him.

We cannot quote Ibn Dawud's last words here, nor the final lines of Ruzbihan's 'Jasmine of Love's Faithful' *(cf.* part II of the present study); but we can affirm that each of their statements typifies perfectly the respective attitude and destiny of these two Islamic 'Platonists' at the heart of prophetic religion. What the Platonist Ibn Dawud feared, in common with the theologians (both the neo-Hanbalites and others), was an assimilation of God to man, which would radically compromise the transcendence of abstract monotheism—that is to say, the purely exoteric conception of the *tawhid.* Likewise, certain Sufis had themselves denied all possibility of attributing eras to God. Others had regarded the *'udhri* lover as a model for the mystical lover whose love is directed towards God. In the case of the latter, there is a transference of love: everything happens as though one were passing from a human *object* to a divine *object.* For the 'Platonist' Ruzbihan, this pious transference is itself a trap. It is only possible to pass between **the** two gulfs of *tashbih* (anthropomorphism) and *ta'til* (abstractionism) by way of human love. Divine love is not the transference of love to **a** divine *object*—it is a metamorphosis of the *subject* of human love.

This theophanic perception led Ruzbihan to formulate a prophetology of Beauty.

Thus we need to evoke here the long line of 'love's faithful' who found in Ruzbihan their fulfilled paradigm. The tri-unity of love-lover-beloved becomes the secret of the esoteric *tawhid.* The tragedy of Ibn Dawud al-Isfahani lay in the fact that it was impossible for him to perceive this secret and to live this threefold union. Ahmad al-Ghazali and Farid 'Attar knew that if the lover contemplates himself in the Beloved, the Beloved in turn can contemplate himself and his own beauty only in the gaze of the lover who is contemplating him. In Ahmad al-Ghazali's doctrine of pure love, lover and beloved are transfigured in the unity of the pure substance of love.

2. Ahmad al-Ghazali (d. 520/1126 at Qazwin in Iran) was the brother of the great theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (see above, V, 7), on whom he may have exerted some influence, but 'did not succeed in communicating to him that passion of pure love, of inconsolable desire, which fires his own writings' (L. Massignon). A little book by Ahmad al-Ghazali, a veritable breviary of love, written in concise and difficult Persian, and which he entitled 'The Intuitions of Love's Faithful' *(Sawanih al- 'ushshaq),* exercised considerable influence. It is a rhapsodic piece of writing, consisting of a series of short and rather loosely-connected chapters, and it brings into play an extraordinarily subtle psychology. As Helmut Ritter, to whom we are indebted for the editing of this valuable text, wrote: 'It would be hard to find a work in which psychological analysis achieves such a level of intensity.' The following is a translation of two short passages.

> 'When love really exists, the lover becomes the nourishment of the Beloved; it is not the Beloved who is the nourishment of the lover, for the Beloved cannot be contained within the capacity of the lover_The moth which has become the lover of the flame is nourished, while still at a distance, by the light of this dawn. It is the forerunner of the illumination of daybreak which beckons it and welcomes it. But it must go on flying until it reaches it. When it reaches it, it can no longer advance *towards* the flame; it is the flame which advances *within* it. The flame is not nourishing the moth; the moth is nourishing the flame. And this is a great mystery. For a fleeting instant it becomes its own Beloved (since it *is* the **flame).** And in this it is made perfect.' (Chapter 39).

> 'Love's plan is a noble one, for it requires that the Beloved should have a sublime qualification. This makes it impossible for the Beloved to be caught in the net of union. It was doubtless in relation to this that when Iblis (Satan)was told:My curse is on thee! (38:79), he replied: I call your Glory to witness! (38:83). This means: what I love in You is that majesty which is so high that no one can rise to your level and no one is worthy of You. For if someone or something could be worthy of You, it would be because there was some imperfection in your Glory.' (Chapter 64) It was this that gave birth to the famous subject of 'Iblis damned by love'.'

3. We cannot separate the name of Ahmad al-Ghazali from that of his favourite disciple, 'Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadhani, who was executed at the age of thirty-three in 525/1131. His tragic fate resembles that of al-Hallaj before him, and prefigures that of al-Suhrawardi, the Shaykh al-Ishraq (see below, VII). 'Ayn al-Qudat was both jurist and mystic, philosopher and mathematician. One of his treatises, *Tamhidat*, which is particularly rich in teachings on love and which develops the doctrine of Ahmad al-Ghazali, was also commentated at length by a fifteenth-century Indian Sufi, Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Gisudaraz. 'The sovereignty of the divine Glory shone out. Then the pen subsisted, but the writer vanished.' 'God is too transcendent for the prophets to know him, and *a fortiori* for others to know him.'

4. We must not omit to mention Majdud ibn Adam Sana'i (d. *ca.* 545/1150), the inventor of the Sufi didactic poem in Persian. His most interesting work is a long poem entitled 'The Journey of Men towards their Return' *{Sayr al-'ibad ila al-ma'ad),* and it describes, in the form of an account in the first person, a pilgrimage through the cosmos of the Islamic neo-Platonists. This mystical voyage takes place under the guidance of the intelligence in person (whom the *Fedeli d'amore* in Dante were to call *Madonna Intelligenza).* This was also the theme of Avicenna's 'Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan', of al-Suhrawardi's mystical prose Recitals, and of all the literature on the theme of the *Mi 'raj*. Here already is posited the structure which would expand into the vast mystical epics orchestrated in Persian by Farid al-Din 'Attar, 'Assar of Tabriz, Jami, and other lesser-known poets.

5. These all too brief observations enable us to perceive what might be called the 'metaphysics of Sufism'. With Ruzbihan of Shiraz we

approach the climax represented by his younger contemporary Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, whose summa of mystical theosophy is a monument for which it is difficult to find a comparison. The Hellenizing philosophers have been left behind. Would their path again cross that of the Sufi metaphysic, or were their aims different enough to justify certain sarcasms on the part of the Sufis about the inability of philosophers to 'get off the ground'? By way of reply we can say that the work of al-Suhrawardi, and with it the birth of the *ishraqi school,* were a response to the profound demand of a culture in which the history of philosophy is inseparable from the history of spirituality.

VII. Al-Suhrawardi and the Philosophy of Light

1. THE RESTORATION OF THE WISDOM OF ANCIENT PERSIA

1. Our previous studies of Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi, commonly known as the *Shaykh al-Ishraq*, have put us in a position to appreciate the full importance of his work. In an imaginary topography, this work is situated at a crossroads. Al-Suhrawardi died just seven years before Averroes. At that moment, therefore, in western Islam, 'Arab Peripateticism' was finding its ultimate expression in the work of Averroes, so much so that western historians, mistakenly confusing Averroes' Peripateticism with philosophy pure and simple, have overlong persisted in maintaining that philosophy in Islam culminated in Averroes. Yet at the same time in the East, and particularly in Iran, the work of al-Suhrawardi was opening up the road which so many thinkers and spiritual seekers were to follow down to our own days. It has already been suggested that the reasons for the failure and disappearance of 'Latin Avicennism' were in fact the same as those which lay behind the persistence of Avicennism in Iran; but from the background of this Avicennism the work of al-Suhrawardi, in one way or another, was never absent.

2. The figure of al-Suhrawardi (not to be confused with the similarly-named Sufis 'Umar and Abu al-Najib al-Suhrawardi) remains graced for us with all the attractiveness of youth, for his tragic fate tore him away from his vast projects at the age of thirty-six (thirty-eight in lunar years). He was born in 549/1155 in north-west Iran, the ancient Media, in Suhravard, a town still flourishing at the time of the Mongol turmoil. While still very young he studied at Maraghah in Azerbaijan, and then went to Isfahan in central Iran, where he found the Avicennan tradition fully alive. He went on to spend some years in south-eastern Anatolia, where he was warmly received by several of the Saljuq princes of Rum. Finally he went to Syria, from which he never returned. The doctors

of the Law instituted proceedings against him whose meaning will become apparent at the end of this survey of his work. Nothing was able to save him from the vindictiveness of the fanatical personality of Salah al-Din, the Saladin of the Crusades—not even the friendship of Saladin's son, al-Malik al-Zahir, the governor of Aleppo, who later became the close friend of Ibn al-'Arabi. Our young shaykh died mysteriously in the citadel of Aleppo on the 29th July 1191. His biographers usually refer to him as *al-shaykh al-maqtul,* meaning murdered or put to death. His followers prefer to say *al-shaykh al-shahid,* the martyred shaykh.

3. In order to grasp the scope of his work from the start, we must focus on the theme of the title of his main work: *Hikmat al-Ishraq,* an 'Oriental theosophy' conceived as a deliberate resurrection of the wisdom of ancient Persia. The great figures presiding over this doctrine are Hermes, Plato and Zoroaster—Zarathustra. Thus, on the one hand, there is Hermetic wisdom—Ibn Wahshiyah had already instanced a tradition in which the *ishraqiyun* were named as being a priestly class descended from Hermes' sister. On the other hand, the connection between Plato and Zoroaster, established in the West at the beginning of the Renaissance by the Byzantine philosopher Gemistos Pletho, was already decisive for twelfth-century Iranian philosophy.

We must observe the distinctively Suhrawardian import of the notions of 'Orient' and 'Oriental theosophy'. We have already mentioned Avicenna's project of an 'Oriental wisdom' or 'philosophy'. Al-Suhrawardi was fully aware of his relationship with his predecessor in this respect. He was acquainted with the 'notebooks' which were thought to preserve what was to have been the *Logic of the Orientals,* and he knew the fragments of the *Kitab al-Insaf which* had survived (see above, V, 4). Furthermore, the idea of the Orient as it is expressed in Avicenna's recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan is the same as al-Suhrawardi's. He is so well aware of this that when, following Avicenna's example, he writes symbolic recitals of spiritual initiation, he praises Avicenna's recital, but only in order to emphasize the fact that his own 'Recital of the Occidental Exile' begins at the point where Avicenna's ends, as if he is making a gesture of supreme significance. What left him dissatisfied with Avicenna's symbolic recital corresponds to what left him dissatisfied with the fragments of his teaching. Avicenna had, to be sure, formulated the project of an 'Oriental philosophy', but the

project was bound to fail, for a decisive reason. Consequently it is to the study of his own book that the 'Shaykh al-Ishraq' invites anyone who wishes to be initiated into 'Oriental wisdom'. For reasons which we cannot go into here, the attempt to establish an opposition between Avicenna's 'Oriental philosophy' and al-Suhrawardi's 'illuminative' philosophy was based on insufficient acquaintance with the texts in question (see below).

The reason that al-Suhrawardi gives to explain why Avicenna could not realize the project of an 'Oriental philosophy' is that he was in ignorance of the principle, the 'Oriental source' *(al-asl al-mashriqi)* itself, which authenticates the qualification of 'Oriental'. Avicenna was unaware of this source, disclosed by the Sages of ancient Persia (the Khusrowanids) and identified with *theosophia,* divine wisdom *par excellence.* 'Among the ancient Persians', writes our shaykh, 'there was a community directed by God; He guided the eminent Sages, who are quite different from the Maguseans *(majusi).* It is their high doctrine of the Light—a doctrine to which, moreover, the experience of Plato and his predecessors bear witness—that I have revived in my book entitled *Oriental Theosophy (Hikmat al-Ishraq),* and no one before me has attempted such a project.'

This has also been the opinion of his spiritual posterity. Sadra al-Shirazi speaks of al-Suhrawardi as the 'head of the Oriental school' *(mashriqiyun),* 'the resurrector of the doctrines of the Persian Sages concerning the principles of Light and Darkness.' These Orientals are also defined as Platonists. Sharif al-Jurjani defines the *ishraqiyun* or *mashriqiyun* as 'the philosophers whose leader is Plato'. Abu al-Qasim al-Kazaruni (d. 1014/1606) says: 'Just as al-Farabi renewed the philosophy of the Peripatetics, and for this reason deserved to be known as *Magjster secundus,* al-Suhrawardi revived and renewed the philosophy of the *ishraqiyun* in many books and treatises.' Very soon the distinction was made between Orientals *(ishraqiyun)* and Peripatetics *(mashsha'un).* The term 'Platonists of Persia' best designates, therefore, the school of which one characteristic was the nterpretation of the Platonic archetypes in terms of Zoroastrian angelology,

4. Al-Suhrawardi developed this key idea in a lengthy work of forty-nine chapters—lengthy, that is, considering the shortness of his life. The nucleus of the work is a great dogmatic trilogy consisting of three treatises of three books each, and comprising Logic, Physics and

Metaphysics. All the themes of the Peripatetic programme are dealt with, for two reasons. Firstly, they serve as propaedeutics, because a solid philosophical training is needed by a person who wishes to set out along the spiritual Way. While those who draw back from following this Way will be able to content themselves with the teaching of the Peripatetics, it is precisely for the sake of those who do follow it that the true theosophy must be freed from all the futile discussions with which both the Peripatetics and the *mutakallimun*—the Islamic Scholastics—have encumbered it. If in the course of these treatises the writer's own profoundest thoughts sometimes break through, it is always with reference to the book to which these treatises are the introduction, the book that contains his secret, *Kitab Hikmat al-Ishraq.* Around the tetralogy formed by this book and the three preceding ones there is a whole body of *Opera minora,* shorter didactic works in Arabic and Persian. The collection is completed by the characteristic cycle of symbolic recitals to which we have already referred; these are mostly written in Persian and, in accordance with the shaykh's plan of spiritual instruction, they provide some of the essential themes for preparatory meditation. The whole is crowned by a sort of Book of Hours, consisting of psalms and invocations to the beings of light.

This entire work is the outcome of a personal experience to which al-Suhrawardi testifies when he speaks of the' conversion that occurred in his youth'. He had started by defending the celestial physics of the Peripatetics, which limits the number of Intelligences—the beings of light—to ten (or fifty-five). In the course of an ecstatic vision he saw this closed spiritual universe explode, and was shown the multitude of those 'beings of light whom Hermes and Plato contemplated, and the celestial beams which are the sources of the *Light of Glory* and of the *Sovereignty of Light {ray wa khurrah)* heralded by Zarathustra, towards which a spiritual rapture raised the most devout and blessed King Kay Khusraw'.

Al-Suhrawardi's ecstatic confession thus refers us to one of the fundamental notions of Zoroastrianism: the notion of the *Xvarnah,* the Light of Glory *(khurrah* in Persian). With this as our starting-point, we must attempt to grasp, however briefly, the notion of *ishraq,* the structure of the world that it governs, and the form of spirituality that it determines.

2. THE ORIENT OF THE LIGHTS (ISHRAQ)

1. After studying the clues given by al-Suhrawardi and his immediate commentators, we realize that the notion of *ishraq* (a verbal noun meaning the splendour or illumination of the sun when it rises) possesses a threefold aspect. (1) We can understand it as the wisdom —the theosophy—of which the *Ishraq* is the source, being both the illumination and the reflection *(zuhur)* of being, and the act of awareness which, by unveiling it *(kashf),* is the cause of its appearance (makes it *a phainomenon).* Thus, just as in the sensible world the term signifies the splendour of the morning, the first radiance of the star, in the intelligible Heaven of the soul it signifies the epiphanic moment of knowledge. (2) Consequently, by *Oriental* philosophy or theosophy we must understand a doctrine founded on the Presence of the philosopher at the matutinal appearance of the intelligible Lights, at the outpouring of their dawn on the souls who are in a state of estrangement from their bodies. What is in question therefore is a philosophy which postulates inner vision and mystical experience, a knowledge which, because it originates in the Orient of the pure Intelligences, is an *Oriental* knowledge. (3) We can also understand this term as meaning the theosophy of the *Orientals (ishraqiyun =mashriqiyun),* the theosophy, that is, of the Sages of ancient Persia—not only because of their position on the earth's surface, but because their knowledge was *Oriental* in the sense that it was based on inner revelation *(kashf)* and mystical vision *(mushahadah).* According to the *ishraqiyun,* this was also the knowledge of the ancient Greek Sages, with the exception of the followers of Aristotle who relied solely on discursive reasoning and logical argument.

2. Our authors, therefore, had never envisaged the artificial opposition established by Nallino between the idea of an 'illuminative philosophy' expounded by al-Suhrawardi, and the idea of an 'Oriental philosophy' expounded by Avicenna. The terms *ishraqiyun* and *mashriqiyun* are used interchangeably. One would have to find a single unique term to designate 'Oriental-illuminative' simultaneously, in the sense that we are here concerned with a knowledge which is *Oriental* because it is itself the *Orient* of knowledge. (Certain terms present themselves spontaneously: *Aurora consurgens, Cognitio matutina.)* In describing it, al-Suhrawardi refers to a period in his life when he was greatly

exercised by the problem of knowledge but was unable to resolve it. One night while he was dreaming, or in an intermediary state of being, Aristotle appeared to him, and he engaged in a closely-argued discussion with him. The account of this takes up several pages of one of his books *(Talwihat).*

But the Aristotle with whom al-Suhrawardi spoke was a frankly Platonic Aristotle, whom no one could regard as responsible for the dialectic fury of the Peripatetics. His first answer to the seeker who questions him is 'Awaken to yourself. Then there begins a progressive initiation into self-knowledge as knowledge which is neither the product of abstraction nor a re-presentation of the object through the intermediary of a form *(surah),* of a Species, but a Knowledge which is identical to the Soul itself, to the personal, existential *(ana'iyah)* subjectivity, and which is therefore essentially life, light, epiphany, awareness of self *(hayah, nur, zuhur, shu'ur bi-dhatihi).* In contrast to *representative* knowledge, which is knowledge of the abstract or logical universal {*'ilm sun),* what is in question is *presential,* unitive, intuitive knowledge, of an essence which is absolutely real in its ontological singularity (*'ilm hudun, ittisalf, shuhudi)*—a presential illumination *(ishraq huduri)* which the soul, as a being of light, causes to shine upon its object. By making herself present to herself, the soul also makes the object present to her. Her own epiphany to herself is the Presence of this presence, and it is this which constitutes the epiphanic or Oriental Presence *(hudur ishraqi).* The truth of all objective knowledge is thus nothing more nor less than the awareness that the knowing subject has of itself. This is the case for all the beings of light in all the worlds and inter-worlds: by the very act of their self-awareness, they cause themselves to be present to each other. This is the case also for the human soul, in the degree to which she tears herself away from the Darkness of her 'Occidental exile', that is to say from the world of sublunary matter. In answer to the seeker's last questions, Aristotle replies that the philosophers of Islam have not even remotely equalled Plato. Then, seeing that the questioner has in mind the two great Sufis Abu Yazid al-Bastami and Sahl al-Tustari (see above, VI, 2 and 5), he says to him: 'Yes, these are philosophers in the true sense.' 'Oriental theosophy' thus effects the union of philosophy and Sufism, which are henceforth inseparable.

3. These 'dawn splendours' refer us to the primordial Flame which is their source, and which al-Suhrawardi claims to have seen in a vision that revealed to him the authentic 'Oriental source'. This is the 'Light of Glory' that the Avesta names as the *Xvarnah (khurrah* in Persian, or in the Parsi form *fan, farrah).* Its function is primordial in Mazdean cosmology and anthropology. It is the effulgent majesty of the beings of light, and it is also the energy which conjoins the being of each being, its vital Fire, its 'personal angel' and its destiny (the word was translated into Greek as both **Δόξα** and **Τυχή).** It is present in al-Suhrawardi as the eternal radiance of the Light of Lights *(nur al-anwar),* whose sovereign force, by illuminating the totality of the light-being which proceeds from it, makes it eternally present to it (*tasallut ishraqi).* It is precisely the idea of this victorious force, this 'victoriality' *(perozih* in Persian) which explains the name used by al-Suhrawardi to designate the sovereign Lights: *anwar qahirah,* 'victo- rial' Lights, dominant and archangelic ('Michaelian'; *cf.* Michael as *Angelus victor).*

Through this 'victoriality' of the Light of Lights, there proceeds from it the being of light which is the first Archangel, whom our shaykh calls by his Zoroastrian name of *Bahman* {Vohu-Manah, the first of the *Amahraspands* or Zoroastrian Archangels). The relationship which eternally unfolds between the Light of Lights and the First Emanant is the archetypal relationship between the first Lover and the first Beloved. This relationship is exemplified at all levels of the procession of being, establishing all beings in pairs. It finds expression in the polarity of dominion and love *(qahr* and *mahabbah; cf.* the Islamic neo-Empedocles, above, V, 3 and below, VIII, 1), or as the polarity of illumination and contemplation, independence *(istighna)* and indigence *(faqr),* and so on. These are all so many intelligible 'dimensions' which, by compounding with one another, transcend the 'two-dimensional' space {of the necessary and the possible) of Avicenna's theory of the hierarchical Intelligences. By engendering each other out of their ii radiations and reflections, the hypostases of Light become countless in number. Intimated beyond the heaven of the Fixed Stars of Peripatetic or Ptolemaic astrology lie innumerable marvellous universes. In oppo- ition to what was to happen in the West, where the development of astronomy eliminated angelology, here it is angelology which takes astronomy beyond the classical schema within which it was confined.

3. THE HIERARCHY OF THE UNIVERSES

1. The world of these Pure Lights is organized into a threefold hierarchy. From the initial relationship between the Light of Lights and the First Emanated Light, through the multiplication of the intelligible 'dimensions' which compound one with another, there proceeds eternally the universe of the Primordial Ruling Lights. Because they are the causes of each other and proceed from each other, they form a descending hierarchy which al-Suhrawardi calls the 'longitudinal Order' {*tabaqat al-tul)*. These are the universes of the Archangels whom he calls the supreme sovereign Lights *(usul A'la'un),* the 'world of the Mothers' *(ummahat,* not to be confused with the term as it is used with reference to the Elements). This hierarchy of the archangelic world of the Mothers culminates in a twofold event which takes place in being.

On the one hand, their 'positive dimensions' {dominion, independence, active contemplation) produce a new Order of Archangels who are no longer each other's causes, but who are equal amongst themselves in the hierarchy of Emanation. These Lights form the 'latitudinal Order' *(tabaqat al-'ard);* they are the archangel-archetypes of 'lords of the species' *(arbab al-anwa'),* identified with the Platonic archetypes—not as realized universals, of course but as hypostases of Light. The names of the Zoroastrian Archangels and of some Angels *(Izad)* are expressly mentioned in their authentic form by al-Suhrawardi. This 'latitudinal Order' also includes the Angel of humanity, the Holy Spirit, Gabriel, the active Intelligence of the *falasifah.*

On the other hand, the 'negative' intelligible dimensions of the 'longitudinal Order' (dependence, passive illumination, love as indigence) produce the Heaven of the Fixed Stars which accords with them. The innumerable stellar individuations of this Heaven {as in the Avicennan schema, each celestial orb is celestial in relation to the Intelligence from which it emanates) are so many emanations which materialize, in a still wholly subtle celestial matter, that part of non-being which conceals—if one thinks of it hypothetically as isolated from its Principle—their being that emanates from the Light of Lights.

Finally, from this second order of Archangels there emanates a new Order of Lights, through the intermediary of which the Archangel-archetypes govern and rule over the Species, at least in the case of the higher Species. These are the Angel-Souls, the *Animae caelestes* and *Animae humanae* of Avicenna's angelology. Al-Suhrawardi, however, calls them by a name borrowed from ancient Iranian chivalry: *Ispahbad* Lights *(Ispahbad* denoting the commander of an army)—a name and function which are not unreminiscent of the *hegemonikon* of the Stoics.

2. Even when sketched in such general terms, al-Suhrawardi's angelology is clearly a grave disruption of the schema of the world—physical, astronomical and metaphysical—which had been accepted from the time of al-Farabi and Avicenna. It is no longer the Moon's orb, as in Peripateticism, which marks the boundary between the celestial world and the material world of becoming. It is the Heaven of the Fixed Stars which now symbolizes the boundary between the angelic universe of Light and Spirit *(Ruh-abad)* and the dark, material universe of the *barzakh.* The characteristic term *barzakh,* when used in eschatology, means the intermediate, and when used in cosmology, it means the inter-world {the *mundus imaginalis).* In al-Suhrawardi's philosophy of the *Ishraq* it assumes a more general meaning: it designates in general everything that is body, everything that is a *screen* and an *interval,* and which of itself is Night and Darkness.

That concept, therefore, that the word *barzakh* connotes is fundamental to al-Suhrawardi's system of physics. The *barzakh* is pure Darkness; it could exist as such even if the Light were to withdraw. Thus, it is not even a potential light, a virtuality in the Aristotelian nense; in relation to Light it is pure negativity, *Ahrimanian* negativity as al-Suhrawardi understood it. It would be a mistake, then, to attempt to base the causal explanation of a positive fact on this negativity. Every species is an 'icon' of its Angel, a theurgy effected by this Angel in the *barzakh* which in itself is death and absolute night. It is an act of light on the part of the Angel, but this light does not combine hylomorphically with the Darkness. From this stems the critique, developed by al-Suhrawardi, of the Peripatetic notion of potential being, matter, substantial forms, and so on. It is true that his physics is based on the schema of Mazdean cosmology, in which the universe of being is divided into *menuk* {celestial, subtle) and *getik* {terrestrial, dense); but his interpretation of it is inspired by Manichaeism. In al-Suhrawardi, the perception of the world includes, in structural terms, a metaphysics of *essences;* existence is simply a way of regarding *{i'tibar)* essence or quiddity—it does not add anything to it *in concrete.* We have already noted that Sadra" al-Shirazi was to promote the 'existential' version

of the *Ishraq in* his own metaphysical system, which posits the anteriority and the precedence of *existence* over essence.

3. The schema of the universe, then, is arranged according to a fourfold plan. (1) There is the world of the pure Intelligences (the archangelic Lights of two first Orders: the cherubic Intelligences or 'Mothers', and the Intelligence-archetypes). This is the world *of the jabarut.* (2) There is the world of the Lights who rule over a body (a 'fortress', *sisiyah),* the world of celestial and human Souls. This is the world of the *malakut.* (3) There is the double *barzakh* made up of the celestial Spheres and the world of sublunary Elements. This is the world of the *mulk.* (4) There is the *mundus imaginalis ('alam al-mithal).* This is the world which is intermediary between the intelligible world of the beings of pure Light and the sensible world; and the perceiving organ proper to it is the active Imagination. It is the world not of Platonic ideas"(muthul-*iflatunlyah),* but of Forms and Images 'in suspension' *(muthulmu 'alla-qah).* This term means that such forms are not immanent in a material sub-stratum, as the colour red, for example, is immanent in a red body; they possess 'epiphanic places' *(mazahir)* where they manifest themselves like the image 'in suspension' in a mirror. This world contains all the richness and variety of the world of sense in a subtle state; it is a world of subsistent and autonomous Forms and Images, the threshold of the *malakut.* In it are to be found the mystical cities of Jabalqa, Jabarsa and Hurqalya.

It appears that al-Suhrawardi was indeed the first to elaborate the ontology of the inter-world, and the theme once introduced was taken up and expanded by all the mystics and gnostics of Islam. Its importance cannot be stressed too strongly. In the perspective of Man's post-mortem existence, the *mundus imaginalis* is the first world disclosed to him. Its function is threefold: the resurrection is achieved by means of it, because it is the place of the 'subtle bodies'. It is by virtue of it that the symbols configurated by the prophets, as well as all visionary experiences, are actually true. Consequently, it is through the *mundus imaginalis* that the *ta'wil* achieved, that is to say the exegesis which 'leads back' the data of the Quranic Revelation to their 'literal spiritual' truth. Without it, there is only 'allegory'. By means of this inter-world, the conflict between philosophy and theology, knowledge and belief, symbol and history, is resolved. It is no longer necessary to choose between the speculative precedence of philosophy and the authoritative

precedence of theology. There is another way, which is the way of 'Oriental' theosophy.

Sadra al-Shirazi integrates this world of imaginative awareness to the *malakut,* which is the reason why the schema of the universe is threefold. But we can now assess what the loss of this inter-world can signify—a loss which was to be the result of Averroism {see below, VIII, 6). We can see it as the dividing line between the East, where the dominant influences were those of al-Suhrawardi and Ibn al-'Arabi, and the West, where 'Arab Peripateticism' was to develop into 'political Averroism'. Although historians are accustomed to viewing Averroism as the last word in 'Arab philosophy', in 'Arabism', in reality 'Islamic philosophy' embraces many other resources and treasures.

4. THE OCCIDENTAL EXILE

1. The meaning and function of al-Suhrawardi's symbolic Recitals of spiritual initiation must be viewed in the perspective of the inter-world. The action of these Recitals, in fact, takes place in the *'alam al-mithal.* In them, the mystic relates the drama of his personal history on the level of a supra-sensible world, the world of the events of the soul, because the writer, in configurating his own symbols, spontaneously discovers the meaning of the symbols of the divine revelations. We are not concerned with a series of 'allegories' but with the secret hierohistory, invisible to the external senses, which unfolds in the world of the *malakut,* and *with* which external and fleeting events *symbolize.*

The Recital in which this fundamental note is most clearly sounded is entitled 'The Recital of the Occidental Exile' *(Qissat al-ghurbah al-gharbiyah).* 'Oriental' theosophy must, indeed, lead the gnostic to an awareness of his own 'Occidental exile', to an awareness of what is in fact the world of the *barzakh* as an 'Occident' opposed to the 'Orient of the Lights'. The Recital thus constitutes an initiation which leads the mystic back to his *origin,* to his *Orient.* The actual event accomplished through this initiation presupposes both the autonomous existence of the *mundus imaginalis* and the plenary noetic value of the imaginative awareness. Here in particular we are given to underitand how and why, deprived of this world and this awareness, the imaginative is debased to the imaginary, and symbolic recitals are regarded merely as fiction.

2. The great concern of the 'Oriental' gnostic is to discover how the exile can return *home.* The *ishraqi* theosopher is essentially a man who does not separate or isolate the philosophical search from spiritual realization. In a very dense page of his vast commentary on the work of al-Kulayni (the *Kafi,* a fundamental Shiite work; see above, II, Preliminary Remarks), Mulla Sadra defines the spirituality of the *hukama' ishraqiyun* {the 'Oriental theosophers') as being itself a *barzakh*—that is to say, an intermediate, linking and uniting the Sufi method, which is essentially directed towards inner purification, with the method of the philosophers, which aims at pure knowledge. For al-Suhrawardi, a mystical experience which takes place without any previous philosophical training is in great danger of leading one astray; but a philosophy which neither aims at, nor culminates in, a personal spiritual realization is pure vanity. Thus, the book which is the vade-mecum of 'Oriental' philosophers—the *Kitab Hikmat al-Ishraq*—begins with a reform of Logic and ends in a sort of prayer of ecstasy—a form taken by many other similar books.

From the beginning, in the prologue, the author classifies the Sages, the *Hukama',* according to whether they possess simultaneously speculative knowledge and spiritual experience, or excel in the one but are deficient in the other. The *hakim ilahi* (etymologically, it will be recalled, this means the *theosophos,* the Sage of God) is he who excels in *both:* he is the *hakim muta'allih* (the idea of *ta'alluh* corresponds to the Greek *theosis).* Hence the saying, repeated by all our thinkers, to the effect that *ishraqi* theosophy is to philosophy what Sufism is to the *kalam,* the dialectic scholasticism of Islam. The spiritual genealogy that al-Suhrawardi attributes to himself is significant. On the one hand, the 'eternal leaven' passes from the ancient Greek Sages (pre-Socratics, Pythagoreans, Platonists) to the Sufis Dhu-al-Nun al-Misri and Sahl al-Tustari; on the other hand, the 'leaven' of the wisdom of the ancient Persians is transmitted by way of the Sufi's Abu Yazid al-Bastami, al-Hallaj, and Abu al-Hasan al-Kharaqani. The two currents meet in the theosophy of the *ishraq.* This is, no doubt, a deliberately thematic view of 'history', but it is all the more eloquent for being so. Coming after the mysterious conversation with Aristotle, it confirms the fact that from now on one will no longer be able to separate philosophy from Sufism in the highest spirituality of Islam,

without even having to stipulate an affiliation to a *tariqah* (a Sufi congregation). Al-Suhrawardi never belonged to one.

3. It is this that indicates what al-Suhrawardi's mission, both creative and reformative, meant for Islam. If one persists in viewing Islam as merely an external, legalistic and literalist religion, such a mission amounts to an 'insurrection'. This is all that certain historians have seen with regard to al-Suhrawardi, as well as with regard to the Ismailis and to all the Shiite gnostics, and to Ibn al-'Arabi and his school. If, on the other hand, integral Islam is spiritual, encompassing the *shari'ah* the *tariqah* and the *haqiqah* then al-Suhrawardi's noble venture lies at the summit of this spirituality and is nourished by it. The spiritual meaning of the Quranic Revelation explains and transfigures the previous prophetic revelations and wisdom by manifesting their hidden meaning. This intergral, spiritual Islam is what Shiism was from the beginning (see above, II). There thus exists a pre-established harmony, if not more than that, between the *ishraqiyun* theosophers and the Shiite theosophers. Prior even to the school of Isfahan under Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra, this harmony is to be discerned in an *ishraqi* Shiite thinker such as Ibn Abi Jumhur, whose influence on the Shaykhi school persists down to this day. This is due to the fact that both sides strive to attain to the *batin,* the esoteric aspect, the inner spiritual meaning, and both are equally averse to the abstract, sterile arguments of the *mutakal-limun.* Al-Suhrawardi's initiative unites philosophy with Sufism; the initiative of Hayder Amuli in the eighth/fourteenth century, like that of Ismailism after Alamut, brings together Shiites and Sufis who have forgotten their origins and vocation. The concepts of *hikmat ilahlyah* (theosophy) and *'irfan-i shi'i* (Shiite gnosis) overlap.

For al-Suhrawardi, in fact, the man who excels equally in philosophy and in spiritual experience is to be found at the summit of his hierarchy of Sages. Such a man is the *pole (qutb),* and without him the world could not continue to exist, even if he is only in it *incognito,* completely unknown to men. This is one of the most important themes of Shiism *(cf.* a conversation between the first Imam and his follower Kumayi ibn Ziyad). In Shiite terms, the 'pole of poles' is the Imam. His existence *incognito* presupposes both the Shiite idea *of the ghaybah,* the occultation of the Imam, and the idea of the cycle of the *walayah* succeeding the cycle of prophecy, after the 'Seal of the prophets'. As we know (see above, II, A), this *walayah* is none other than the Islamic name

for the permanent 'esoteric prophecy' *{nubuwah batiniyah).* Even the doctors of the Law in Aleppo made no mistake about this. During al-Suhrawardi's trial, the charge leading to his condemnation was that he had professed that at any time, even at this moment, God can raise up a prophet. Even if what was in question was not a prophet-legislator but the *nubuwah batiniyah,* such a profession was at the very least indicative of crypto-Shiism. In this manner, through his life's work and his death as a martyr to the cause of prophetic philosophy, al-Suhrawardi lived the tragedy of the 'Occidental exile' to its very end.

S. THE ISHRAQIYUN

1. The *ishraqiyun* are the spiritual descendants of al-Suhrawardi, and, in Iran at least, they still continue to exist. The first of them chronologically, was Shams al-Din al-Shahrazuri, who distinguished himself by his devotion to the *shaykh al-ishraq.* Paradoxically, almost nothing is known about the biography of this thinker, to whom we are indebted for a 'History of the Philosophers'. We know that when al-Suhrawardi was imprisoned in the citadel of Aleppo, he was accompanied by a young disciple named Shams. But it is impossible to say whether they were the same person, especially if we accept that al-Shahrazuri apparently died during the last third of the seventh/thirteenth century. However that may be, we owe to him two commentaries which are important also as personal testimonies: the first of these is the commentary on al-Suhrawardi's *Book of Elucidations (Talwihat),* and the second is a commentary of the *Book of Oriental Theosophy (Kitab Hikmat al-Ishraq).* It seems that al-Shahrazuri's work was put to good use by two of his successors: Ibn Kammuna (d. 683/1284} in his commentary on the first of these works, and Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi in his commentary on the second, which was completed in 694/1295.

We are indebted to al-Shahrazuri for three other works. (1} *A History of the Philosophers,* including both the philosophers prior to Islam and the philosophers of Islam. The biography of al-Suhrawardi which it contains is the most complete that we possess. (2) A *Book of Symbols (Kitab al-Rumuz),* in which the writer pays particular attention to certain neo-Pythagorean motifs. (3) An immense philosophical and theological encyclopaedia, recapitulating the teaching of its forerunners, and entitled *Treatises on the Divine Tree and on Theosophical Secrets (Rasa'il al-shajarah al-ilahlyah wa al-asrar al-rabbaniyah).* There are copious quotations from the I*khwan al-Safa',* Avicenna and al-Suhrawardi. It was completed in 680/1281—some ninety years, that is, after al-Suhrawardi's death. There are six or seven manuscripts of it in existence, comprising more than a thousand pages in folio.

2. Al-Suhrawardi had been far-sighted. He had envisaged something in the nature of an 'Order of *Ishraqiyun',* grouped around his seminal book *(Hikmat al-Ishraq).* He transposed the Quranic expression *ahl al-kitab,* meaning a community in possession of a Book revealed from Heaven (see above, I, 1), and called his 'Order of *Ishraqiyun' Ahl hadha al-Kitab',* meaning a community grouped around the present book of Oriental theosophy. There is another and even more significant feature. The head of this community was to be a *qayyim bi al-kitab,* a 'Keeper of the Book', who would be consulted on the hidden meaning of its difficult passages. (Al-Shahrazuri knew that he had a right to claim this qualification for himself.) Now the expression *qayyim al-kitab* serves in Shiism to denote the Imam and his essential function (see above, II, A, 4). It is certainly not by chance that, having spoken in the prologue to his great book of the part played by the *qutb,* the *pole,* al-Suhrawardi should again make use of a typical Shiite expression. In fact, there have always been *ishraqiyun* in Iran; they exist today, even though their community has no external organization and the *qayyim bi al-kitab* is unknown.

3. Throughout the centuries, there have been those who were influenced to one degree or another by the thinking of the Shaykh al-Ishraq, and those who were *ishraqiyun* but who professed a doctrine enriched by successive additions. Research remains to be done on the influence of the *ishraq* treatises on, for example, Nasir Tusi, Ibn al-'Arabi and the Iranian Shiite commentators of Ibn al-'Arabi (see part II). The task of inter-relating *Ishraq,* Ibn al-'Arabi and Shiism was achieved by Muhammad Ibn Abi Jumhur. Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE there was an extraordinary outburst of activity. The works of al-Suhrawardi were extensively commentated. Jalal al-Din al Dawwani (d. 907/1501) and Ghiyath al-Din Mansur al-Shirazi (d. 949/1542) wrote commentaries on the *Book of the Temples of Light.* Wadud al-Tabrizi wrote a commentary on the *Book of Tablets dedicated to 'Imad al-Din* (930/1524). The prologue and the second—the

most important—part of the great *Book of Oriental Theosophy were* translated and expanded in Persian, as was Qutb al-Shirazi's commentary, by an Indian Sufi, Muhammad Sharif ibn al-Harawi (the work is dated 1008/1600). Mir Damad (d. 1040/1631), the great master of the school of Isfahan, took the name *Ishraq* as his *nom de plume.* His famous disciple, Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi (d. 1050/1640) gave a whole series of very personal discourses on the *Book of Oriental Theosophy,* which altogether amount to a work of considerable length.

At this same period, the pious generous initiative of the Mogul emperor Akbar {d. 1014/1605) produced a spate of intense spiritual exchanges between India and Iran, with much coming and going of philosophers and Sufis. Ali Akbar's colleagues were steeped in the doctrines of *ishraq.* It was in this 'climate' that the great work of translating the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita, and so on, from Sanskrit into Persian, was begun. This vast undertaking, and Akbar's great religious vision, also involved a whole group of Zoroastrians from Shiraz and the surrounding area who, accompanied by their high priest Azar Kayvan, emigrated to India between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Prominent among them is the figure of Farzanah Bahram-i Farshad, a man totally dedicated to the works of al-Suhrawardi and who translated part of them into Persian. In this way, in the 'climate' created by Akbar, the Zoroastrians found themselves represented in al-Suhrawardi, 'the resurrector of the wisdom of ancient Persia'.

These brief notes will suffice to indicate the extraordinary influence of al-Suhrawardi's work over the centuries. His influence in present-day Iran is inseparable from that of the Shiite thinkers who assimilated him, and above all from that of Mulla Sadra and his successors down to 'Abd Allah Zunuzi and Hadi Sabzavari, not forgetting the original position of the Shaykhi school. Today it is rare to be an *ishraqi* without also belonging in some degree to the school of Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi. In this way, the 'future' of al-Suhrawardi in Iran is linked with the revival of traditional metaphysics, which formed around the work of the master from Shiraz.

In Andalusia

We now come to an altogether different area of the Islamic world: the area of its furthest penetration into the West. Its cultural 'climate' is other than that of the East, particularly of Iran, and must be viewed in the historical context of the fortunes of Islam in the Iberian peninsula. We cannot give even an outline of this history here, and will have to confine ourselves to mentioning only a few of the major names and works. This cursory survey will enable us to perceive the ease with which ideas and men circulated from one end to the other of the *dar al-Islam.*

1. IBN MASARRAH AND THE SCHOOL OF ALMERIA

1. The importance of this school lies in the fact that it represents, at the Western extremity of the Islamic world, the esoteric Islam that we have come to know in the East, and that it exercised considerable influence. Its existence was, indeed, responsible for the part played at both geographical extremities of Islamic esotericism by the teaching of Empedocles—an Empedocles transformed into a herald of prophetic theosophy. Asin Palacios, on the other hand, preferred to see Ibn Masarrah's followers as perpetuating the gnosis of Priscillian {fourth century CE); and it is true that the principal features of this gnosis—the Idea of a universal matter that is co-eternal with God, the divine origin of the soul, its union with the material body as the result of a sin committed in the world beyond, its redemption and return to its homeland as the effects of a purification made possible by the teaching of the prophets, the exegesis of the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures—arc all present in Ibn Masarrah and his school.

According to his biographers, Ibn Masarrah, who was born in 269/ 883, was not an Arab by race. We note that his father 'Abd Allah's physical appearance was such that even though he was a native of Cordoba, he was able to pass as a Norman from Sicily on his journeys

to the East—to Basrah, for example. More importantly, this father, a passionate lover of theological speculation who had frequented Mu'tazilite and esoteric circles in the East, sought to transmit to his son the features of his own spiritual physiognomy. Unfortunately, he died in 286/899, while completing his pilgrimage to Mecca. His son was barely seventeen, yet was already surrounded by disciples. With them he withdrew to a hermitage that he owned in the Sierra of Cordoba. The people rapidly became suspicious of him: when one is thought to be teaching the doctrine of a certain ancient Sage named Empedocles, one can obviously expect to be denounced as an atheist. Moreover, the political position of the Emirate of Cordoba at that time was extremely precarious. Ibn Masarrah chose to go into exile, accompanied by two of his favourite disciples.

He went as far as Medina and Mecca, thus making contact with the Eastern schools. He only returned to his country during the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman III, whose policy was more liberal. Even so, having learned from his contacts with the esoteric *(batini)* circles in the East, Ibn Masarrah was extremely wary. He returned to his hermitage in the Sierra of Cordoba, and there, to only a few of his followers, he revealed the meaning of his doctrines in the form of symbols. He developed an entire philosophy and way of spiritual life. Unfortunately, we know neither the number of his books nor their exact titles. Only two can definitely be attributed to him: one is the *Book of Penetrating Explanation (Kitab al-Tabsirah),* which no doubt contained the key to his esoteric system, and the other is a *Book of Letters (Kitab al-Huruf),* concerned with the mystical algebra mentioned above (IV, 2 and 5). These books circulated from hand to hand, escaping the vigilance of the *fuqaha'* while increasing their anger, and reached the East, where two 'orthodox' Sufis undertook to refute them. It does not appear that any legal action was taken or that there was an *auto-da-fe,* at least during Ibn Masarrah's own lifetime. Exhausted by his task, the Master died, surrounded by his disciples, in his hermitage in the Sierra, on the 20th October 319/931, aged barely fifty.

2. The veil under which he concealed his doctrine, the restricted number of his disciples, the heresy imputed to him and the impiety attached to his name are all factors that account for the poverty of the means available to us whereby a reconstruction of his work might be attempted. Nevertheless, this reconstruction has been accomplished

by the great Spanish Arabist, Asin Palacios. His task was twofold. On the one hand, the doctrine of Empedocles appeared to him as the axis around which Ibn Masarrah's most characteristic doctrines were grouped. On the other hand, Ibn Masarrah's system had to be reconstructed with the help of lengthy quotations from his work, which are mainly to be found in Ibn al-'Arabi.

The first task was relatively easy, thanks to the historians and the doxographers, notably al-Shahrastani, al-Shahrazuri, Ibn Abi Usaybi-'ah, and al-Qifti. The hagiographic legend of the neo-Empedocles that was known in Islam {see above, V, 3 and VII, 2) does contain some parts of the authentic biography, even if exaggerated and transformed. According to these authors, Empedocles was chronologically the first of the five great philosophers of Greece: Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. He was regarded as a hierophant, a prophet, dedicated to spiritual teaching and practice. He lived apart from the world, travelled around the East, and refused all honours. In short, he was seen as one of the prophets prior to Islam who could be contained within the wide context of Islamic prophetology. His moral physiognomy was that of a Sufi, and some of his books were known and quoted.

3. The doctrines attributed to him are principally concerned with the following themes: the pre-eminence and esotericism of philosophy and psychology, leading to the encounter with the *ruhaniyah,* the spiritual person or reality of the hidden being; the absolute simplicity, ineffability and mobile immobility of the first Being; the theory of Emanation; the categories of soul; individual souls as emanations of the Soul of the world; their pre-existence and redemption. The whole doctrine is enormously rich in both Gnostic and neo-Platonic terms.

Here, all we can say something about is the theory of the hierarchical Emanation of the five substances: the primordial Element or *Materia prima,* which is the first of the intelligible realities (not to be confused with universal corporeal matter); the Intelligence; the Soul; Nature; and secondary Matter. If we refer to the Plotinian hierarchy of the One, the Intelligence, the Soul, Nature and Matter, the difference is immediately obvious between Plotinus and the Islamic neo-Empedocles. The first of the Plotinian hypostases, the One, has been eliminated from the schema and replaced by the first Element or *Materia prima.* Certainly, there is in Plotinus *(Enneads* n, 4, 1 and 4) a clear idea

of a matter which exists in the intelligible world, distinct from and prior to our matter, and which provides the subject or *formed* being that is presupposed by all forms. But the difference is that for the neo-Empedocles this intelligible matter as such possesses actual reality, and he makes it the first divine Emanation. (We may recall the book *De Mysteriis Aegyptorum,* in which Porphyry explains the magical virtue of images and temples by the fact that they are made out of this pure divine matter.) It is precisely the idea of this universal intelligible Matter that is the characteristic theorem of Ibn Masarrah's doctrine. The following are three brief observations about it.

(a) The elevation of the first Plotinian hypostasis to a level above the schema of the five substances is in accordance with the Ismaili requirement that the Principle or Primary Cause be elevated to a level above being and non-being. It is worth stressing this, in view of the affinity of Ibn Masarrah's school and doctrines with those of the Islamic esotericism encountered elsewhere, especially the Shiite and Ismaili doctrines.

(b) Along with the theory of intelligible Matter we have a recurrence of Empedocles' notion of the two cosmic energies, which are designated as love (φιλία, φιλότης) and discord (νεῖκος). The Arabic equivalent of the first of these terms is the word *mahabbah*, but the equivalent given for the second term essentially modifies its content. The words *qahr* and *ghalabah*, which are equivalents not of the Greek νεῖκος but of κρατεῖν, commonly used in astrology, connote the idea of domination, victory, sovereignty. In al-Suhrawardi, *qahr* and *mahabbah* are two 'dimensions' of the intelligible world (see above, VII, 2); *cahir* qualifies the 'victorial Lights', the pure archangelic Lights. Far from *qahr* being the distinguishing mark of the beings of corporeal matter, for al-Suhrawardi it qualifies the Avestan *Xvarnah,* the Light of Glory or sovereignty of Light. Thus there is one radical difference between neo-Empedoclism and the classical Empedocles—a subject which calls for further research.

(c) The doctrine of a primordial intelligible Matter exercised considerable influence. It is present not only in the Jewish philosopher Solomon ben Gabirol (died between 1058 and 1070 AD), but also in the work of Ibn al-'Arabi, a fact which enabled Asin Palacios to achieve a partial reconstruction of Ibn Masarrah's thought. Ibn Masarrah's neo-Empedoclean metaphysical theorem of the five substances or principles of

being has its corollary in Ibn al-'Arabi in the descending hierarchy of the five meanings of the term 'matter'. (1) There is the spiritual matter which is common both to the uncreated and to the created *(haqiqat al-haqa'iq,* the Essence of essences). (2) There is the spiritual matter which is common to all created beings, both spiritual and corporeal *(nafas al-rahman).* (3) There is the matter which is common to all bodies, celestial or sublunary. (4) There is physical matter (our matter) which is common to all sublunary bodies. (5) There is artificial matter, which is common to all accidental forms. Finally, the idea of a 'spiritual matter' *[cf.* Henry More's *spissitudo spiritualis)* was to be of fundamental importance in the eschatology of Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi and the school of Isfahan.

4. We cannot give an account here of the changes of fortune experienced by the school of Ibn Masarrah, a school which was the first society of mystics formed in Muslim Spain. The school had to survive in an atmosphere of intolerance and suspicion, harassment and anathema. Obliged as they were to pursue a strict esotericism, the 'Masarrians' formed a secret hierarchical organization with an Imam as its leader. The most famous of them, at the start of the fifth/eleventh century, was Isma'il 'Abd Allah al-Ru'ayni, whose own daughter was reputed by the initiates to possess extraordinary theological knowledge. Unfortunately, during Isma'il's lifetime a schism occurred, in the aftermath of which we lose track of the school as a social organization. However that may be, the mystical bent of Ibn Masarrah's ideas continued to have a profound effect.

The most convincing proof of the presence of Ibn Masarrah's spirit of mysticism at the heart of Spanish Sufism is the enormous influence exercised by the esoteric core of the school of Almeria. After the death of Isma'il al-Ru'ayni, and at the start of the sixth/twelfth century, at the height of Almoravid power, Almeria became the capital, so to •peak, of all the Spanish Sufis. Abu al-'Abbas ibn al-'Arif composed a new rule for the spiritual life *(tariqah),* which was based on the theosophy of Ibn Masarrah. This rule was widely diffused by three great disciples: Abu Bakr al-Mallurqin in Granada, Ibn Barrajan—whose name was to be inseparable from that of Ibn al-'Arabi—in Seville (but he was deported to Morocco with Ibn al-'Arif, where they both died around 536/1141); and Ibn Qasi in the Algarve in southern Portugal, where he organized the initiates of Ibn Masarrah's school

into a sort of religious militia known by the mystical name of *muridun*. Both the theosophical doctrine and the organization have significant features in common with those of Ismailism. Ibn Qasi reigned for ten years as the sovereign Imam in the Algarve, dying in 546/1151. Fourteen years after his death, in 560/1165, Ibn al-'Arabi was born, one of whose great works was to be a commentary on the only work by Ibn Qasi that has come down to us — a theosophical-mystical commentary on the command received by Moses before the Burning Bush: 'Take off thy sandals'. (Quran 20:12).

2. IBN HAZM OF CORDOBA

1. To Cordoba also belongs one of the most arresting characters of Andalusian Islam in the tenth and eleventh centuries, a complex character whose many sides are reflected in his work. There is Ibn Hazm the poet, Ibn Hazm the thinker, the theologian, the critical historian of religions and of the schools of philosophy and theology, the moralist and the jurist. Reinhardt Dozy describes him as *vir immensae doctrinae.* We are principally interested here in the Platonist and the historian of religions. Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Hazm was born in 383/994 into a family of high social standing; he himself liked to trace his ancestry back to a certain Persian called Yazid. His father was vizir to the caliph al-Mansur, and the young Ibn Hazm was thus able to receive the teaching of the famous masters of Cordoba in all the disciplines: the *hadith,* history, philosophy, law, medicine and literature.

Unfortunately, in April 403/1013, an entire quarter of Cordoba was sacked by the Berbers. In June of the same year, Ibn Hazm lost his father. With revolt brewing against Umayyad rule Ibn Hazm was expelled from Cordoba and his goods were confiscated. We see him, then, in his twentieth year, completely caught up in politics, taking his place among the most loyal supporters of the Umayyad dynasty. He fled to Almeria, where he played a leading part in the movement favouring the prince 'Abd al-Rahman IV, the legitimate pretender to the caliphate, against 'Ali ibn Hammud. But the prince was killed during a fight in which his army was routed, and Ibn Hazm was taken prisoner. He was, however, set free.

Nothing daunted, Ibn Hazm took refuge in Shatibah {Jativa). Here he found enough security and peace to write his remarkable book about love, *The Dove's Necklace* (*Tawk al-hamamah).* This is also a journal of his life's experience, in which he reveals among other things a wound that till then had been kept secret: his youthful love for his parents' adopted daughter. He always remained loyal to the cause of the Umayyad nobility as the only legitimate dynasty. He was the most staunch supporter of prince 'Abd al-Rahman V who succeeded in gaining the throne, under the name of al-Mustazhir, in 413/1023, and whose vizir he became. But the appointment was short-lived. Two months later, in February of the same year, al-Mustazhir was killed, and Ibn Hazm was once more banished from Cordoba. All hope of an Umayyad restoration was henceforth abandoned. Ibn Hazm renounced all political activity and devoted himself to science. He died in 454/1063.

2. In the book entitled *The Dove's Necklace*, Ibn Hazm takes his place among the initiates of Islamic Platonism, in which his famous predecessor was Muhammad ibn Dawud al-Isfahani (d. 297/909), whose remarkable *Kitab al-Zuhra* was mentioned earlier (VI, 6). It is likely that in the library of the castle of Jativa Ibn Hazm discovered a copy of the book by Ibn Dawud al-Isfahani. He refers expressly to the passage in the book where Ibn Dawud alludes to the Platonic myth of the *Symposium:* 'Certain initiates of philosophy have thought that in creating each spirit, God gave it a spherical form; he then split it into two parts, and placed each half inside a body.' The secret of love is the reunion of these two parts in their initial wholeness. The idea of the pre-existence of souls is indeed stated expressly in a *hadith* of the Prophet. Ibn Hazm refers to this, but he prefers to interpret it in the sense of a reunion of the higher element of souls that are isolated and scattered in this world. It is a question of the affinity between the impulses which move them and which came into being in their pre-existence in the higher world. Love is the mutual convergence of the form which perfects them. Like seeks like; love is a spiritual adhesion, an interfusion of souls.

As for the cause which for the most part prompts the unfolding of love, Ibn Hazm's analysis is clearly reminiscent of Plato's *Phaedrus.* This cause 'is a form which is outwardly *(zahir)* beautiful, because the soul is beautiful and desires passionately all that is beautiful, and inclines towards perfect images. If she sees such an image, she concentrates upon it; and if she then perceives in this image something

of her own nature, she is irresistibly attracted by it, and love in the true sense results. But if she does not perceive something of her own nature beyond the image, her affection does not go beyond the form'. It is important to set this sort of analysis in Ibn Hazm, who is a *zahirite* (that is, an *exotericist* in canonical matters, attached to the evidence of the letter and the appearance) alongside reflections such as the following: 'O pearl concealed beneath the human form:'_____'I see a human form, but when I meditate more deeply, it appears to me as a body from the celestial world of Spheres.' These reflections could come from *esotericists* such as Ruzbihan of Shiraz or Ibn al-'Arabi, who are concerned to see each appearance as a 'theophanic form'. The dividing line between one and the other is rather vague: in both cases, the appearance becomes *apparition.* This is something that must be borne in mind in connection with the z*ahirism* of the theologian Ibn Hazm.

We are indebted to the Arabist A.R. Nykl both for the first edition of the Arabic text of Ibn Dawud's book, and the first translation of Ibn Hazm's book into a Western language (English). A question of extreme interest has also been pursued by A.R. Nykl, a question which concerns the close resemblance between Ibn Hazm's theory of love and some of the ideas which occur in the 'Gaie Science' of Guillaume IX of Aquitaine, and in general in the main themes of the troubadours' repertory until the time of the crusade against the Albigensians. We can do no more here than point to the existence of the problem. The implications of it—geographical, typological, and spiritual—are enormous , for it is a question not just of form and theme, but of an element in common between the *Fedeli d'amore* and the religion of love professed by certain Sufis. But we must distinguish carefully between the positions adopted (see above, VI, 6). For the Platonist Ibn Dawud, for al-Jahiz, and for the neo-Hanbalite theologian Ibn al-Qayyim, the way of love has no divine outcome—it does not *emerge* anywhere. For the Platonism of the Sufis, for Ruzbihan of Shiraz and Ibn al-' Arabi, the way of love *is* this emergence. All the spirituality of the Sufis who came after them is different in tone from that of those who went before them. *'Udhri* love is not simply the model of God's love, because it is not a question of going from a human *object* to an *object* which is divine. What is in question is a transmutation of human love itself, for it is 'the only bridge over the torrent of the *tawhid'.*

Ibn Hazm's book on *Character and Behaviour {Kitab al-Akhlaq wa al-siyar),* which has been translated into Spanish by Asin Palacios, is also valuable in relation to the previous book, because in it the author defines the technical terms he uses in his analysis of the aspects of love. Moreover, it too is a work which springs, more or less, from the author's personal 'diary'. Without any predetermined plan, he sets down in it his observations, reflections and judgments on men and life. It is an extremely revealing book about man and society in fifth/eleventh century Andalusia.

3. As a canonist, Ibn Hazm is notable for *a book {Kitab al-Ibtal,* partially edited by I. Goldziher) in which he writes of the five determinants to which the different schools have recourse in order to make a juridical decision: analogy *(qiyas),* personal opinion *(ra'y),* approbation *(istihsan),* imitation *(taqlid),* and motivation *(ta'til).* In another book *{Kitab al-Muhalla),* he strongly criticizes the principles of the Shafi'ite school. Together with the z*ahirite* doctrine, these books establish the bases for discussion with other writers.

By far the most important work of the theologian Ibn Hazm, however, is his treatise or religions and schools of thought *(Kitab al-fisal fi al-milal waal-ahwa'waal-nihal,* Cairo 1321/1903; also translated into Spanish by Asin Palacios). This long work is rightly regarded as the first treatise on the comparative history of religion to be written in Arabic or in any other language. In it the Master of Cordoba reveals the full scope of his genius and of his vast knowledge. He treats of the different religions, and also of the different attitudes of the human spirit in the face of religion, from that of the sceptic, who questions all sacred values, to that of the simple believer.

He divides people and doctrines into several categories, according to their attitude. There is the category of atheists, which includes both sceptics and materialists. There is the category of believers, which includes both those who believe in a personal divinity and those who believe in an abstract and impersonal divinity, with no relationship to humanity. The first group in this latter category is subdivided into monotheists and polytheists. Among the former a further distinction must be made between those who possess a Book revealed from Heaven by a prophet, and those who do not have such a Book. Those in possession of a Book (the *ahl al-kitab; cf.* above, I, 1) fall into two different classes: those who have faithfully preserved the sacred text

over the centuries without altering it in any way, and those who have altered the text. For Ibn Hazm the criterion for the truth of religion consists therefore in the affirmation of the divine Unity *(tawhid)* and the preservation over the centuries of the text of the Revelation in its integrity. Viewed in this light, religion is essentially founded on the sense of the divine, of the sacred; and the authenticity of this sense depends on the affirmation of the transcendent Unity, which is itself guaranteed by the prophetic Revelation. If this Revelation is to exercise a permanent influence, it must be preserved textually from century to century, since the text is the threshold itself whereby the believer may approach the divine mystery.

Such, broadly speaking, is the religious universe as seen by Ibn Hazm, and it was in accordance with it that he founded his *exoteric (zahiri)* system as the only way to attain spiritual truth. In order to support the suggestion made above with regard to this *zahirism,* we may recall that Ibn al-'Arabi, one of the greatest *esotericists (batini)* of all time, was himself also an Andalusian and, legally speaking, a *zahiri!.*

3. IBN BAJJAH (AVEMPACE) OF SARAGOSSA

1. With Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn al-Sa'igh ibn Bajjah (Aven Badja, the *Avempace* of our Latin Scholastics), we move briefly to the north of the peninsula. This philosopher, whose short life was beset by tribulation, deserves special attention for the depth of his thought and his influence on Averroes and on Albert the Great. He was born at Saragossa at the end of the fifth/eleventh century, but in 512/1118 Saragossa was taken by Alfonso I of Aragon. This is why in the same year Ibn Bajjah fled to Seville, where he practised medicine, and then to Granada. He next went to Morocco, and was held in high esteem at the court of Fez, where he even held the post of vizier. Butin 533/1138 the doctors of Fez, it is said, decided to get rid of their young and envied rival by poison. One of his friends and followers, a certain Abu al-Hasan 'Ali of Granada, wrote in the introduction to his collection of his master's treatises that Ibn Bajjah had been the first who truly promoted the teaching of the oriental philosophers of Islam in Spain. If one thinks of Ibn Masarrah, this eulogy is perhaps somewhat exaggerated. In any case, the Jewish philosopher Solomon ben Gabirol (Avicebron) preceded him, though it is true that his writings were unknown to the Muslim philosophers.

2. Ibn Bajjah is credited with several commentaries on the treatises of Aristotle (the *Physics,* the *Meteorology,* the *De generatione,* the *History of Animals).* His chief philosophical works remained unfinished, as Ibn Tufayi expressly states (see below, VIII, 5) while paying homage to his depth of spirit and lamenting his unhappy fate. They included various treatises on Logic, a treatise on the Soul, a treatise on the union of the human intellect with the active Intelligence—a theme which he took up again in the 'Letter of Farewell' addressed to one of his young friends on the eve of a voyage, in which he spoke of the true aim of existence and knowledge and which is quoted in the Latin version of Averroes' works as *Epistula expeditionis.* Finally, there is the treatise which earned him his reputation, entitled *The Regime of the Solitary (Tadbir al-mutawahhid).* Like al-Farabi, the solitary and contemplative Oriental whose influence upon him, given their affinity, was inevitable, Ibn Bajjah had a particular fondness for music and was himself a lute-player.

We should also note his extensive knowledge of medicine, mathematics and astronomy. It was through his interest in astronomy that he became involved in the opposition against Ptolemaic conceptions. The *status quaestionis* was discussed above in connection with Ibn al-Haytham (IV, 8). As long as the celestial Spheres are thought of as mathematical fictions for the use of geometrists in calculating the planetary motions, the philosophers do not need to interfere. But as soon as they are thought of as concrete bodies, whether solid or fluid, the hypotheses must satisfy the laws of celestial physics. The celestial physics that was generally accepted was that of Aristotle and involved the notion of homocentric Spheres whose circular motion was centred on the centre of the world—thereby excluding the idea of epicycles and eccentrics. Throughout the twelfth century, the most eminent philosophers of Islamic Spain (Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufayl, Averroes) took part in the battle against Ptolemy, and this culminated in the system of al-Bitruji (the *Alpetragius* of the Latins) which had its supporters among those opposed to the Ptolemaic system up until the sixteenth century. We are indebted to the great Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (d. 1204 CE) for making known to us the substance of a treatise on astronomy composed by Ibn Bajjah. For pertinent reasons (having, of course, accepted the laws of motion as defined by the Peripatetics), Ibn Bajjah is opposed to epicycles and proposes his own

hypotheses. These were to influence Ibn Tufayl. inasmuch as he too, according to Averroes and al-Bitruji himself, took an interest in astronomy.

As we said above {IV, 8), what was actually in question was an *Imago mundi* which was the result less of experimental requirements than of an a *priori* perception of the universe. This perception is part and parcel of all the conceptions of the philosopher, and helps to situate Ibn Bajjah within the 'pleroma' of the Islamic philosophers. He himself made his situation clear in adopting a stand where al-Ghazali was concerned (see above, V, 7). Al-Ghazali appeared to him to have simplified the problem by saying that the contemplation in solitude of the spiritual world, a contemplation vouchsafed him through divine illumination, afforded him sweet delight. The truth is that al-Ghazali's essentially religious form of mysticism was alien to Ibn Bajjah; the philosopher's contemplation leads to something more detached. It can truly be said that by his influence on Averroes, Ibn Bajjah gave philosophy in Spain an orientation totally contrary to the spirit of al-Ghazali. Only the labour of speculative knowledge can lead man to knowledge of himself and of the agent or active Intelligence. It is none the less the case that the terms favoured by Ibn Bajjah, *solitary* and *stranger,* are in fact typical of mystical gnosis in Islam. It could thus be said that we are concerned with the same spiritual type, realized in individuals whose perception of their common goal differs, and who consequently differ also in their choice of the way to attain this goal. In Spain, one of these ways is that of Ibn Masarrah, which Ibn al-'Arabi was to follow. Another way is that of Ibn Bajjah, which was adopted by Averroes.

3. S. Munk has provided a lengthy analysis of Ibn Bajjah's major work, the original of which was unfinished and was discovered only recently by Asin Palacios. Fortunately, the Jewish philosopher Moses of Narbonne {fourteenth century CE) had himself analysed it and quoted from it at length in his Hebrew commentary on Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan.* From the sixteen extant chapters of this work, which are in truth uncommonly dense, we can only extract (and that not without difficulty) a few of the essential themes. The guiding principle can be described as an *itinerarium* leading the human spirit to union with the active Intelligence.

First of all the author explains the two words of the title, *The Regime*

of the Solitary. By 'regime' is meant 'several actions arranged according to a certain plan and for a certain purpose'. Now, 'the orderly combination of actions, requiring reflection, is only to be found in the *solitary* man. The regime of the solitary must be the image of the political regime of the perfect State, the model State.' Besides the influence of al-Farabi, the affinity with Abu al-Barakat al-Baghdadi is apparent here. We should observe that this ideal State is postulated neither *a priori* nor as the result of a political *coup d'etat.* It can be the result only of a preliminary reform of customs, a reform which is far more than 'social': it truly begins at the beginning, and aims first and foremost at the realization within each individual of the plenitude of human existence—the existence of the solitary—for (to adopt a somewhat facile play on words) it is the solitaries alone in Ibn Bajjah's sense who manifest solidarity.

These solitaries are men who have attained union with the active Intelligence, and who are thus able to form a perfect State in which there is no need for doctors, because the citizens have the best possible diet, nor for judges, because each individual has achieved the greatest perfection of which a human being is capable. At present, in all the imperfect States in which they live, the *solitaries,* with God as their only doctor, have the task of becoming the elements of the perfect City, the *plants* which must be cultivated and developed by the *regime* envisaged by the philosopher Ibn Bajjah, and which leads to the blessedness of the *solitary.* This term can be applied, therefore, both to the isolated individual and to several individuals at once; for as long as the community does not adopt the customs of the solitaries, they remain men whom Ibn Bajjah, with reference to al-Farabi and the Sufis, calls *strangers within* their families and their society, because they are citizens of the ideal republic anticipated by their daring spirituality. The stranger *(gharib),* the alien: the word comes from ancient Gnosis, runs through the sayings of the Shiite Imams, dominates al-Suhrawardi's *Recital of the Occidental Exile,* and is evidence in Ibn Bajjah that it is difficult to separate philosophy in Islam from gnosis.

4. To explain the basis on which the regime of the solitaries is founded, we must first group human actions in relation to the *forms* which they envisage, and also determine the *aims* of these actions in relation to the forms which each of them envisages. Here Ibn Bajjah, with astonishing speculative power, develops a theory of *spiritual forms*

to which we can only allude here. In the briefest possible terms, this theory distinguishes between the intelligible forms which must be abstracted from matter, and the intelligible forms which are in themselves separate from matter, and thus are perceived without having to be abstracted from it. The regime of the solitary leads him to perceive the former in a state and in circumstances which eventually reproduce the state and circumstances of the latter.

The forms which have to be abstracted from matter are called the hylic intelligibles *{ma'qulat hayulaniyah).* The possible (or hylic) intellect of man possesses them only *in potentia;* it is the active Intelligence which causes them to be *in actu.* Once *in actu,* they are perceived in their universality—that is to say, in the universal relationship which an essence sustains with the material individuals that exemplify it. But the ultimate goal of the solitary has no reference to matter *{hyle}.* For this reason, in the end the universal relationship must itself disappear, and the solitary must perceive the forms in themselves, neither as immanent in matter nor as having to be abstracted from it. His intellect in some sense grasps the ideas of ideas, the essences of essences, including the essence itself of man, thanks to which man understands himself as being/intelligence. The forms which become intelligible *in actu* are then themselves intellect *in actu,* and this is the meaning here of the term *acquired intellect* or intellect emanated from the active Intelligence. Like the active Intelligence, these forms are unrelated to matter *(hyle),* because the intellect *in actu* is itself the 'substratum' of the acquired intellect.

In other words, when the intelligibles *potentia* have been abstracted from matter and become objects of thought, then their being is the being of forms which are no longer in matter. Intelligibles *in actu,* they are the acquired intellect which is the *form* of the intellect *in actu.* We can thus understand that once they have become intelligibles *in actu,* the forms of beings are the supreme term of those beings, and as such are themselves beings. And we can agree with al-Farabi that those things which are thought, having become intelligible *in actu*—that is, intellect in *actu*—are also able to think, inasmuch as they are intellect *in actu.*

The aim of the solitary is plain. It is to effect the operation whereby forms no longer have to be abstracted from a substratum, that is to say from their matter *{hyle).* 'When the intellect is *in actu* in relation

to all things which are intelligible *in actu,* it thinks of no being other than itself, but it thinks itself without abstraction' (without, that is, having to abstract a form from matter. This whole theory should be compared with the theory of 'presential knowledge' among the *ishraqiyun;* see above, VII).

5. There is one step left to take. 'There are beings who are pure forms without matter, forms which have never been in matter.' Hence, when these beings are thought, they do not need to become pure intelligible objects; they are already pure intelligible objects, as they were before being thought by the intellect, without having to be abstracted from matter. Because it is *in actu,* the intellect finds them separate from all matter and also *in actu; it* thinks them as they exist in themselves, as things which are intelligible and immaterial—their existence undergoes no change at all. We must conclude, then, that as the acquired intellect is the form of the intellect *in actu,* so these intelligible forms become forms for the acquired intellect, which is then as it were the substratum, the 'matter', of these forms, as it is also at the same time a form for the intellect *in actu* which is as it were its substratum.

Each of the forms which are at present *in concrete* immanent in their matter exists in and for the active Intelligence as a unique, separate and immaterial Form, without, of course, having had to be abstracted by the Intelligence from its respective matter, just as in the case of the intellect in *actu.* This is precisely the reason why man, in his essence, comes nearer than any other thing to the active Intelligence, because, as we have just seen, the acquired intellect is capable in its turn and by itself of the same movement as the movement of the intellect *in actu* when it thinks itself. Then there is born 'the true intelligible conception, that is to say the perception of the being which by its very essence is intellect *in actu,* with no past or present need of something to make it emerge from a state of potentiality.' This is a definition of the separate active Intelligence {*'aql fa'* 'al} as active and always in the act of intelligizing itself; and this is the term of all movements.

This brief summary will perhaps suffice to indicate the depth of Ibn Bajjah's thought. If we refer to what has been said here of the active Intelligence as the Holy Spirit, in connection with prophetic philosophy, Avicennism and al-Suhrawardi, it may be said that Ibn Bajjah's remarkable intellectual rigour makes him stand out from all the philosophers of Islam who, like him, have drawn up something re-

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sembling a phenomenology of the Spirit. The work is incomplete, going no further than Chapter 26. Averroes not unreasonably found it obscure, and we shall never know how Ibn Bajjah would have gone on from this last chapter to conclude his *Regime of the Solitary.*

4. IBN AL-SID OF BADAJOZ

1. This philosopher, contemporary with Ibn Bajjah, was rediscovered by Asin Palacios; through the fault of his biographers, he had long been thought to be a grammarian and a philologist. He lived his life during the critical period of transition between the reign of the minor local dynasties *(tawa'if)* and the Almoravid invasion. He was born in 444/1052 in Badajoz in Extremadura, whence he was named *al-Batalyusi,* meaning from Badajoz. He was forced by the situation to seek refuge in Valencia, then in Albarracin, where he held the post of secretary at the little court of the emir 'Abd al-Malik ibn Razin (1058-1102 CE), and finally in Toledo, where he settled for several years. He must also have lived in Saragossa, since it was there that he conducted a polemic with Ibn Bajjah on questions of grammar and dialectic, which he recapitulated in his *Book of Questions (Kitab al-Masa'il).* But, like Ibn Bajjah, he had to flee in 1118, when the town was taken by the Christians. He died in 521/1127, having devoted his last years to writing his books and instructing his disciples.

Of the eleven works mentioned by Asin, we will concentrate only on the last work, the *Book of Circles,* which earned the writer a place among the philosophers. For a long time, the book was known only to the Jewish philosophers, because the famous Moses ibn Tibbon (1240-1283 CE) had already produced a Hebrew version of it—an initiative which bears witness to the respect in which he held Ibn al-Sid's work. The work does in fact admirably reflect the state of knowledge and of philosophical problems in Muslim Spain, at a time when Ibn Bajjah was writing his own works, and several years before Ibn Tufayl and Averroes had planned theirs. In his *Book of Questions,* Ibn al-Sid had already been led to take a stand which is typical of a situation in which esotericism, such as that of the school of Almeria, is set aside, and religion and philosophy proceed to try and adapt themselves to each other. For our philosopher, religion and philosophy differ neither as regards their object nor as regards the aim of their respective

doctrines; they seek and teach the same truth by different methods and by addressing themselves to different faculties in man.

2. This is the philosophy described by Ibn al-Sid in his *Book of Questions.* It is true that it is an emanationist philosophy, but it is one which, unlike that of the Avicennians, is not content to reproduce the hierarchy of Plotinian hypostases as first principles. It goes on to systematize them with arguments of a mathematical nature, thereby lending a certain neo-Pythagorean tone to the whole system, as Asin Palacios has pointed out. Numbers are the symbols of the cosmos; the rhythm of the duration of things is genetically explained by the decad, which is the essence of all number; the One enters into all beings, is their true essence and their ultimate end. There is no doubt that the influence of the *Ikhwan al-Safa'* (see above, IV, 3) plays a part here; their writings had been circulating in Andalusia for over a century. Furthermore, it appears that Ibn al-Sid possessed the same liking for diagrams as the Ismailis.

Three circles symbolize the three stages of Emanation: (1) There is the decad of the pure active Intelligences or Forms without matter, of whom the tenth is the active Intelligence; (2) There is the decad of Souls: nine for the celestial Spheres, and the universal Soul, which emanates directly from the active Intelligence. (3) There is the decad of the material beings (form, corporeal matter, the four elements, the three natural kingdoms, and Man). In each circle, then, the tenth place is occupied respectively by active Intelligence, the universal Soul, and Man. The first chapter of the book is entitled "The explanation of the thesis of the philosophers stating that the order in which beings proceed from the first Cause resembles an ideal circle *(da'irah wahmiyah),* whose point of return to its beginning is in the form of Man'.

5. IBN TUFAYL OF CADIZ

1. This philosopher has already been mentioned (see above, VIII, 3) in connection with the opposition of the Peripatetics to Ptolemy's astronomy. His abilities were acknowledged by both Averroes and al-Bitruji. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Tufayl was born in Cadiz (*Wadi-Ash)* in the province of Granada during the first years of our twelfth century. Like all his colleagues, his scholarship was encyclopaedic: he was a doctor, mathematician, astronomer, philos-

opher and poet. He held the post of secretary under the governor of Granada, then went to Morocco, where he was the close friend, vizir and doctor of the second sovereign of the Muwahhid (Almohad) dynasty, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (1163-1184). Few other details are known about his external life. It is reported, however, that on the wishes of the sovereign he gave his friend Averroes the task of undertaking an analysis of the works of Aristotle. Averroes has even left a detailed account of his first interview with the sovereign. Ibn Tufayl died in Morocco in 580/1185.

Our Latin Scholastics, for whom the name Abu Bakr became *Abubacer*, knew of him only through a critique by Averroes (the *De Anima*, V), in which he reproaches Ibn Tufayl for identifying the potential intellect of man with the imagination. Ibn Tufayl held that when it is correctly employed the Imagination has the ability to receive the intelligibles, and that there is no need to posit any other intellect. One regrets the disappearance of a work which not only would have facilitated our understanding of the aims of his 'philosophical romance', but would also have helped us to make fruitful comparisons with the theory of the imagination so widely developed among the thinkers of Oriental Islam.

2. Ibn Tufayl owed his later reputation above all to the 'philosophical romance', entitled *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, which was unknown to the Latin Scholastics. The work was translated into several languages, first into Hebrew by Moses of Narbonne in the fourteenth century, then into Latin in the seventeenth century by Edward Pococke, with the title *Philosophus autodidactus* (see *in fine* Bibliography). As we have seen, the whole of the speculative life of our philosophers centres round the spiritual being who is the active Intelligence, the tenth Angel of the first spiritual hierarchy, the Holy Spirit of prophetic philosophy. But the theory is so profoundly lived to its limits—by their transconscious *{sirr)* rather than by their subconscious selves—that it unfolds into a dramaturgical work whose characters are the philosopher's own symbols in the *itinerarium* leading him to this Intelligence. This was so in the case of Avicenna (see above, V, 4) as well as in the case of al-Suhrawardi (above, VII, 4). Ibn Tufayl was contemporary with al-Suhrawardi, and their respective intentions are strikingly similar. On his part, al-Suhrawardi drew the inspiration for his symbolic recitals from an experience which led him to the realization of the

'Oriental philosophy' which, he said, Avicenna had been unable to attain. Ibn Tufayl, in the prologue to his philosophical romance, refers to 'Oriental philosophy' and to Avicenna's recitals, because he knows that the former is to be found in these latter recitals. These philosophers have a single theme in common, and each of them develops it according to the bent of his own genius.

Essentially, Ibn Tufayl is indebted to Avicenna for the names of the characters—the *dramatis personae.* First, there is the recital by Avicenna of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (*Vivens filius vigilantis).* In passing, we should mention one theory which was quickly dropped: some researchers, misled by a *lapsus* on the part of Ibn Khaldun, suggested that there had been a third story bearing the same title, also by Avicenna, which had been Ibn Tufayl's model. This is not the case. Iranian tradition, which goes back to Avicenna's immediate circle, is quite definite on this point. The Avicennan recital as we know it is certainly the one to which Ibn Tufayl refers; but in Ibn Tufayl, Hayy ibn Yaqzan no longer represents the active Intelligence, but the *solitary* so dear to Ibn Bajjah, whose idea is thus taken to its furthest limits. Ibn Tufayl's recital is an original work, and in no way a mere extension of Avicenna's.

The names of the other two characters come from Avicenna's recital of *Salaman and Absal.* There are two works with this title. First, there is a Hermetic recital translated from the Greek, and expanded by the poet Jami (d. 898/1492) into a vast mystical epic in Persian. Secondly, there is the recital by Avicenna known to us only from the quotations and the summary of it given by Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 672/1274). We also know that, in Avicenna's own words, 'Salaman does no more than typify you yourself, whereas Absal represents the stage you have reached in mystical gnosis.' On the other hand, according to the interpretation given by Nasir Tusi, they are the two aspects of the soul: Salaman is the practical intellect, and Absal is the contemplative intellect. As we shall see, it was this interpretation that Ibn Tufayl retained.

3. The setting of his philosophical romance, or, more accurately, of his 'recital of initiation', consists principally of two islands. On one of the islands the author situates a human society with its laws and customs; on the other island lives a *solitary*, a man who has attained full spiritual maturity without the help of any human teacher and outside all society. The men who make up the society on the first island live

under the constraint of a Law which is wholly external to them, and possess a religion whose mode of expression remains at the level of the world of sense. Nevertheless, two men stand out from this society; they are named Salaman and Absal (in accordance with most of the manuscripts and Ibn Tufayl's own reference to the matter, the authentic form of *Absal is* to be preferred to the corrupt *Asal).* These two men, then, raise themselves to a higher level of awareness. Salaman, who has a practical and 'social' spirit, adapts himself to popular religion and ends up by governing the people. But Absal, whose nature is contemplative and mystical, cannot adapt himself (a reminder of the transposed Avicennan recital). Absal, an exile in his own country, decides to emigrate to the island opposite, which he believes is completely uninhabited, in order to devote himself to the speculative life and to spiritual exercises.

In fact, this uninhabited island is 'peopled' by a hermit, Hayy ibn Yaqzan. He appeared there in a mysterious manner, either through the spontaneous generation of matter made spiritually active by the active Intelligence, or else because, abandoned as a baby to the sea, he miraculously reached the island. In any case, the little child is first succoured by a gazelle that is a living example of the sympathy uniting all living beings, and which nourishes and rears him. Then begins his mysterious education, with no visible human teacher. This is divided into seven-year periods, and from septenary to septenary Hayy ibn Yaqzan is brought to the maturity of a perfect philosopher (we are giving the briefest possible summary). Ibn Tufayl describes how the solitary acquires his first notions of physics; how he learns to distinguish between matter and form; how from the idea of body he rises to the threshold of the spiritual world; how he speculates, as he contemplates the Spheres, on the eternity of the world; how he discovers the necessity for a Demiurge; how he reflects on the nature and condition of his own intellect and becomes aware of the true and inexhaustible essence of man, and of what is for him the source of suffering of joy; how, in order to resemble God, he strives to let nothing subsist in him except thought alone, and is consequently led to the ineffable state in which he perceives the universal Theophany. The solitary perceives the divine appearance shining in the Intelligences of the highest Spheres, gradually diminishing as it approaches the sublunary world; finally he descends into his own depths, and perceives that there is a multitude of individual

essences resembling his own, some surrounded by light and purity, and others by Darkness and torment.

4. It is when he emerges from this ecstatic vision, after seven septenaries—seven times seven years—have passed, and the solitary is in his fiftieth year, that Absal joins him on the island. Their first encounter is difficult, and there is suspicion on both sides. But Absal succeeds in learning Hayy's language, and they make an astonishing discovery together: Absal realizes that all that was taught him about religion in the island of men is already known to Hayy, the solitary philosopher, guided solely by the active Intelligence, but known in a purer form. Absal discovers what a symbol is, and that all religion is the symbol of a spiritual truth and reality which is inaccessible to men without this veil: their inner vision is paralysed, both because their attention is focused exclusively on the world of sense and because of their social habits.

When Hayy learns that on the island opposite there are men living in a state of spiritual blindness, he nobly wishes to go and make the truth known to them. Absal agrees to go with him, but with regret. Thanks to a boat which chances to come to the shore of their island, the two solitaries go to the island where Absal used to live. To begin with they are received with great honour; but as they extend the scope of their philosophical indoctrination they observe that friendship gives place to coldness, and then to a growing hostility, for people are incapable of understanding them. On their side, the two friends realize that human society is beyond redemption, and they return to their island. They now know through experience that perfection, and consequently happiness, is accessible only to a few: the few that have the strength to renounce.

V There have been many views about the meaning of this tale and Ibn Tufayl's deepest intentions in writing it. There is no need to list them here, for it is the quality of symbols to possess inexhaustible meanings, and it is up to each reader to discover the truth for himself. It is wrong to see it as a Robinson Crusoe story. All the external events must be understood in a spiritual sense. We are concerned with the philosopher's spiritual autobiography, and Ibn Tufayl's intention corresponds with Avicenna's and with that of all his fraternity. The education leading to a full awareness of things is not the work of an

external human teacher. It is the illumination of the active Intelligence; but the active Intelligence only illumines the philosopher on the condition that he strips himself of all profane and worldly ambitions, and that he lives even in the midst of the world the life of a solitary, so dear to the heart of Ibn Bajjah. He must be solitary because the final meaning of Ibn Tufayl's recital appears to be that while the philosopher can understand the religious man, the reverse is not the case; the man who is simply and solely religious cannot understand the philosopher.

Adopting this point of view, Averroes was to classify men according to three spiritual categories: men of apodictic demonstration, of dialectical disputation, and of rhetorical exhortation. Does the return of Hayy ibn Yaqzan and Absal to their island mean that the conflict between philosophy and religion in Islam is desperate and without remedy? This is perhaps what one is accustomed to believe about Averroism when one speaks of it as the 'last word' in Islamic philosophy. But it is only a small area of the entire field of philosophy in Islam. To encompass the latter in its entirety and to understand what its future is to be, we must refer to what was said above {ch. II) about Shiism and prophetic philosophy.

6. AVERROES AND AVERROISM

1. The name of Averroes is one that evokes a powerful personality and an authentic philosopher of whom more or less everyone in the West has heard. The misfortune is that in this case Western vision has been lacking in perspective. We have already lamented the fact that it has been repeated over and over again that Averroes was the greatest name and the most eminent representative of what has been called 'Arab philosophy', and that with him this philosophy attained its apogee and its goal. In this way we have lost sight of what was happening in the East, where in fact the work of Averroes passed as it were unnoticed. Neither Nasir Tusi, nor Mir Damad, nor Mulla Sadra, nor Hadi Sabzavari had any inkling of the role and the significance attributed by our textbooks to the Averroes-Ghazali polemic. If it had been explained to them they would have been amazed, as their successors today are amazed.

Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad *ibn Rushd* (Aven Rushd, which became Averroes for the Latins) was born at

Cordoba in 520/1126. His grandfather and father had been famous jurists, invested with the dignity of supreme judge *{qadi al-qudat),* and influential political personages. Needless to say, the young Averroes received a complete education: theology and law *(fiqh),* poetry, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and philosophy. In 548/1153 he went to Morocco, and in 565/1169-1170 he was *qadi* of Seville. The same year saw the completion of his *Commentary on the Treatise on Animals* and his *Lesser Commentary on Physics.* This was an immensely productive period of his life. In 570/1174, he completed his *Lesser Commentaries on Rhetoric and Metaphysics,* and became seriously ill. When he had recovered, he set out again on the journeys enjoined by his profession. In 574/1178 he was in Morocco—this was the year in which he wrote the treatise that was later translated into Latin with the title *De substantia orbis;* and in 578/1182 the Muwahhid sovereign Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, to whom he had been presented by Ibn Tufayl, appointed him as his physician, and then conferred on him the dignity of Qadi of Cordoba. Averroes enjoyed the same favour at the hands of the sovereign's successor, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Mansur.

Yet already at this period of his life his philosophical opinions were arousing the suspicions of the doctors of the Law, in spite of the fact that he observed all the external prescriptions of the *shari'ah.* It seems that as he grew older, Averroes withdrew from public affairs in order to devote himself wholly to his philosophical studies. Nevertheless, his enemies succeeded in putting him out of favour with al-Mansur who, when he had passed through Cordoba in 1195, had showered Averroes with yet more honours. He was put under house arrest in Lucena (Elisana), near Cordoba, where he was subjected to the insults, satire and attacks of the 'orthodox' theologians and the people. Although it is true that al-Mansur recalled him to Morocco, it was not an order to restore him to favour: he died, without having seen Andalusia again, on the 9th Safar 595/10th December 1198, in a state of seclusion. He was seventy-two years old. His mortal remains were transferred to Cordoba. Ibn al-'Arabi, who when very young had met Averroes, attended the funeral and has left us a moving account of it.

2. The works of Averroes are too many for us to examine them in detail here. He wrote commentaries on most of the works of Aristotle,

for his goal as a philosopher was to restore Aristotle's thought to what he believed to have been its authenticity. In the case of some of the treatises, there are even three sets of commentary: greater, lesser and paraphrase. Hence Dante's comment: *Averrois che'lgran comento feo.* Sometimes his exposition is more free, and Averroes speaks on his own account, as in the *Epitome of the Metaphysics.* Apart from his commentaries, he wrote a number of other works of major importance.

First and foremost we must mention the *Tahafut al-tahafut,* his monumental reply to the critique by means of which al-Ghazali believed himself to be annihilating philosophy—we explained above (V, 7) why we prefer 'The Autodestruction of Autodestruction' as the translation of the title (the Latin translation by Kalo Kalonymos is *Destructio destructionis).* The work is now perfectly accessible even to non-Orientalist philosophers, thanks to the translation made by. Simon van den Berg (*cf.* Bibliography), which contains a wealth of notes giving us detailed information about the references, implications and allusions. Averroes follows al-Ghazali's text step by step, refuting it as he goes along, sometimes taking a wicked delight in referring to al-Ghazali's other books and showing him to be in flagrant contradiction with himself. Given the positions adopted by philosophers and theologians with respect to the same problems, one would have to be a great optimist to conclude from reading this book that they are divided by formulas rather than by essential things. The only other works we can mention here are the essays on physics, collected in the Latin editions under the title of *Sermo de substantia orbis* {see above); two treatises on the problem central for our philosophers, namely the union of the separate (that is to say immaterial) active Intelligence with the human intellect; and three treatises on the accord between religion and philosophy.

We should point out, with S. Munk, that it is due to the Jewish philosophers that a good number of the works of Averroes have survived. The Arabic copies of them were always very rare, for the relentlessness with which the Muwahhids hunted down philosophy and philosophers prevented their reproduction and dissemination. By contrast, the scholarly rabbis of Christian Spain and Provence collected them, and made Hebrew versions of them—they even made copies of the original Arabic, in Hebrew characters. The origins of Latin Averroism go back to the Latin translation of Averroes' commentaries

on Aristotle made by Michael Scot, probably during his stay at Palermo from 1228 to 1235 when he was court astrologer to the Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen.

3. Bearing these all too brief observations in mind, we may say that having to deal with Averroes in a few lines is a task all the more formidable because the main concern of each historian seems often to have been to demonstrate that in the great debate about the relationship between philosophy and religion, Averroes belongs to his own camp. Renan makes him a freethinker before the word was invented; in reaction to this, more or less recent studies tend to show him as an apologist for the Quran, or even as a theologian, inmost cases without taking the trouble to explain exactly what they mean by the word. It can never be said too often that, once posed as a result of the translations from Arabic into Latin, some of the problems that have absorbed Christians do not necessarily take the same form in Islam and have no exact equivalent there. We must above all specify what Arabic term, in the present case, is being translated as theologian, never forgetting that the situation of the philosopher-theologian in Islam differed from that of his Christian 'homologue' in both the opportunities and the difficulties he experienced.

In fact, Averroes' perspective is determined by a strict 'discernment of spirits'. If we recall what was said at the beginning of the present study, we will recognize that Averroes was not the first in Islam to lay that the text of the divine Book revealed by the Prophet consists of the exoteric *{zahir)* letter, and one or more esoteric *(batin)* meanings. like all esotericists, Averroes was firmly convinced that psychological and social catastrophes of the worst kind would result from the untimely revelation of the esoteric meaning of religious prescriptions and teachings to the weak and ignorant. In spite of this reservation, he knew that it was always the same truth that was present at different levels of interpretation and comprehension. It would therefore be wrong to attribute to Averroes himself the idea that there could be two contradictory truths. The famous doctrine of the 'double truth' actually belongs to Latin political Averroism.

To confuse this doctrine with Averroes' esotericism one would have to be entirely ignorant of the nature of the mental operation known as *ta'wil*—that is to say, the spiritual exegesis that we have already singled out as one of the sources of philosophical meditation in Islam

(I, 1). Esoteric truth and exoteric truth are in no sense contradictory. More specifically, we cannot study and appreciate the *ta'wil* practised by Averroes without knowing how it operated elsewhere: in Avicenna, in al-Suhrawardi, in Sufism and Shiism, above all in Ismailism. There is something common to them all, of course, but there are also fundamental differences in the practice of the *ta'wil*, and it is due precisely to these that the situation of the philosopher Averroes and of Averroism in the West is not that of esotericism in Oriental Islam.

4. A technical and detailed comparison has not yet been made. On one essential point such a comparison would clarify not only the themes but also the consequences of Averroes' cosmology, inasmuch as this cosmology ended by destroying the second hierarchy of Avicennan angelology, the hierarchy of the *Angeli or Animae caelestes.* This world of the *Animae caelestes,* the *malakut,* was—as the whole *ishraqi* tradition stresses—the world of autonomous Images perceived in their own right by the active Imagination. It is the world which authenticates the visions of prophets and mystics, as well as the meaning of the Resurrection and the multiple meanings of the Revelation, each of which symbolizes with the others. Once this world had disappeared, what was to become of the new birth of the soul, an event connected, especially in Ismailism, with the soul's progression through the night of symbols? Would the *ta'wil* degenerate into mere technique? At all events, it is unwise to speculate about Averroes' 'rationalism' while assuming things about him that properly belong to the internal conflicts of Christian thought. The question must be placed in the only context which gives it any real meaning.

Because his aim was to reaffirm a cosmology in purely Aristotelian terms, Averroes criticized Avicenna's triadic schema, which situated the *Anima caelestis* between the pure separate Intelligence and the celestial orb (see above, V, 4). Each orb is moved by a virtue, a finite energy, which acquires infinite power through the desire which moves it towards a being that is neither a body nor a power subsisting in a body, but a separate (immaterial) Intelligence, that moves this desire through being its final cause. According to Averroes, it is in homonymy, in pure metaphor, that the name of *soul* can be given to this kinetic energy, this desire which is an act of pure intellection. What motivates this critique is the adoption of an attitude which is fundamentally opposed to Avicennan emanationism—to the idea of a successive

procession of Intelligence from the One—for the simple reason that the idea of emanation is still allied with the idea of creation. Such an idea of creation is unintelligible for a strict Peripatetic, for whom there is no creative cause.

5. If a hierarchy exists in cosmology, it is because the kinetic force of each orb desires not only the Intelligence that pertains to its own Heaven, but also the supreme Intelligence. This Intelligence can thus be named as the cause, not in the sense of being the cause of emanation, but in the sense in which 'that which is understood' (intelligized) is the cause of 'that which understands it'—that is to say, as the final cause. Just as any intelligent and intelligible substance can in this sense be the cause of several beings, because each of these beings understands it in its own fashion, so the *Primum movens* can be such a cause, because in each Heaven the kinetic force of each orb understands it differently, in its own fashion. Thus, there is neither creation nor successive procession, but simultaneity in an eternal beginning.

The strict principle of *Ex Uno non fit nisi Unum* which governs Avicenna's neo-Platonic schema has been left behind, abolished as superfluous. (It had also been weakened by al-Suhrawardi's metaphysics of light, used for a similar purpose by Nasir Tusi.) Together with this, Averroes rejected the Avicennan idea of the active Intelligence as the *Dator formarum.* For him, forms are not ideal realities, extrinsic to their matter. They are not placed in matter by an agent; matter itself contains in potentiality its innumerable forms, which are inherent in it (a position which is diametrically opposed to that of al-Suhrawardi).

6. Once the notion of the *Anima caelestis* was abolished, what was to become of the principle at the heart of Avicennan anthropology: the homology between the *Anima caelestis* and the *anima humana,* between the relationship of the human soul to the angelic active Intelligence and the relationship of each *Anima caelestis* with the Intelligence towards which it is moved by its desire? How would one now accomplish the mystical journey towards the East in the way envisaged by Hayy ibn Yaqzan? Here again we must go back to the choices that determined the course of events. In the same way as Alexander of Aphrodisias, Averroes held to the idea of a separate Intelligence; but unlike him he rejected the idea that the potential human

intelligence was a simple disposition connected with the organic constitution. This was why Averroism and Alexandrism were to divide Western thought, as though the former represented the religious idea and the latter unbelief. The first of these two propositions was responsible for the insults directed at Averroes (Averroes, the Peripatetic!) by the anti-Platonists of the Renaissance, such as George Valla and Pomponazzi. Yet in the final analysis, were not Valla and Pomponazzi simply following Duns Scotus in rejecting the idea that the active Intelligence is a separate, divine and immortal substance, which is able to unite with us by means of the Imagination? In fact, were they not in general simply reaffirming the already overt rejection of Latin Avicennism and its idea of the active Intelligence?

On the other hand, this potential human intelligence, whose independence of the organic constitution was maintained in opposition to Alexander of Aphrodisias, is still not that of the personal individual. The personal individual as such possesses only the ability to receive that which is intelligible, and this ability disappears along with bodily existence. Whereas, for example, Mulla Sadra Shirazi, an Avicennan *ishraqi,* demonstrated forcefully that the principle of individuation is present in form, Averroes accepts matter as the principle of individuation. Thus the individual is identified with the corruptible, and immortality can only be generic. All one can say is that there is eternity within the individual, but what is 'eternizable' in him belongs wholly to the active Intelligence alone, not to the individual.

We know the extent to which each gnostic and mystic in Islam meditated on the Quranic verse 7:143, in which Moses asks God to reveal himself to him and received this reply: 'You will never see Me. However, behold this mountain: if it remains firm in its place, then—only then—will you see Me.' But when God revealed His glory to the mountain, He reduced it to dust; and Moses fell down in a swoon'. Nothing could be more telling than Averroes' *ta'wil* of this verse, as explained by Moses of Narbonne in his commentary on the Hebrew version of the treatise on the possibility of union with the active Intelligence. Man's hylic intellect does not possess *ab initio* the possibility of perceiving the active Intelligence. It must first become intellect *in actu,* and only then 'you will see Me'. But in this union, finally, it is the active Intelligence which perceives itself by particularizing itself for a moment in a human soul, as light is particularized

This union marks the obliteration of the passive intellect (like Moses' mountain)—it is not the gage and guarantee of individual survival. This takes us very far from Avicennism, in which the inalienable guarantee of spiritual individuality is this very awareness of itself that it succeeds in attaining through union with the active Intelligence.

TRANSITION

1. For a short time in the West, and in Iran down to our own day, Avicennism tended to be productive of mystical life, whereas Latin Averroism culminated in the political Averroism of Jean de Jandun and Marsilio of Padua (fourteenth century CE). Viewed in this light, the names of Avicenna and Averroes could be taken as the symbols of the spiritual destinies which awaited the East and West respectively, without imputing their differences to Averroism alone.

We have seen how Abu al-Barakat al-Baghdadi (see above, V, 6) pushed Avicennan gnosiology to its limit in that, according to him, each individual—or at least the individuals making up one spiritual family—had a distinct active Intelligence, which was a 'separate' spiritual entity. As we have already observed, the solutions proposed for the problem of the active Intelligence are highly revealing. When, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas gives each individual an active intellect, yet affirms that this intellect is not a 'separate' spiritual entity, he severs the direct relationship of the individual with the divine world, a relationship established by Avicenna's doctrine of the active Intelligence, itself identified with the Holy Spirit or Angel of Revelation. Once this relationship—a relationship which establishes the autonomy of the spiritual individual without a terrestrial intermediary—is severed, the authority of the Church takes the place of Hayy ibn Yaqzan's personal norm. Instead of the religious norm signifying liberty in the sense that it affirms an essentially individual initiation, it now becomes socialized; and spirit and soul rise in revolt against it. Once socialized, this norm ceased to be religious, and veered from monotheism to monism, from the idea of the divine Incarnation to the idea of the social Incarnation. So here, above all, we must be careful to observe the differences.

If we stress the fact that the Islamic religion does not possess the organs of a dogmatic magisterium, it is because it cannot bequeath either the concept or the thing itself to the secularized society which

would abide by it, as happens in the case where, for a secularized 'orthodoxy', 'deviationism' is substituted for 'heresy'. In Christianity, it was philosophy which joined battle with the magisterium, which had perhaps been all too diligent in preparing the weapons that were being turned against it. By contrast, it was not something like a political Averroism which could induce the Islamic Spirituals to free themselves from an oppressive orthodoxy, from the legalistic literalism of a *shari'ah.* Such freedom was obtained by means of the *ta'wil,* whose implications in Islamic esotericism in general must be fully analysed if we are to discover its homologues in the West.

2. It has been said that Averroes' asseveration 'O men! I do not say that the knowledge which you call divine science is false; what I am saying is that I have knowledge of human science' sums him up completely, and that 'the new humanity that blossomed in the Renaissance had its origin in these words' (Qadri). This may be so; and if such is the case, it would also be true to say that something came to an end with Averroes, something which could no longer survive in Islam but which was destined to shape European thought: the Latin Averroism which recapitulates all that used to be called 'Arabism'—a term which is used today in an entirely different sense. Nevertheless, although Averroist Peripateticism had run its course in western Islam, philosophical meditation still had a long career before it in the East, and particularly in Iran. There, as we have already observed, what speculative endeavour has sought to attain down to our day—the *hikmat ilahlyah* or *philosophia divina*—has a better title, both conceptually and etymologically, to being called theosophy, because the metaphysical secularization which led to the separation of theology as such from philosophy as such was not known in Iran. This separation was effected in the West by Scholasticism itself. On the other hand, as we have seen throughout this study, the fundamental conception which prevailed among our philosophers was less an ethical conception arising out of a social norm than the idea of a spiritual perfection.

The human individual can attain this perfection not by following the *horizontal* direction of political and social matters, but by following the *vertical* direction which connects him to the transcendent hierarchies, the supreme guarantors of his personal destiny. This is why the 'regime of the solitary' inspired in Ibn Bajjah by al-Farabi is far removed from Latin political Averroism.

3. By ending with the death of Averroes, the first part of this study does not conform to the divisions generally adopted in the history of Western philosophy, where the fifteenth century is regarded as a 'decisive turning-point'. But the division into periods with which we are familiar in the West cannot be transposed to the calendar of the Islamic era. The state of affairs at the point where we leave it, at the end of the sixth/twelfth century, is marked in Western Islam by the death of Averroes {595/1198), and in the East by the death of al-Suhrawardi (587/1191). But at this very moment Ibn al-'Arabi came on the scene, and the influence of his vast work was destined to be conclusive. This is the reason why the last decade of our twelfth century saw the emergence of a dividing line, both sides of which were to develop: in the Christian West, into Alexandrism and political Averroism, and in the Islamic East, especially in Iran, into al-Suhrawardi's theosophy of Light, whose influence, combined with that of Ibn al-' Arabi, persists to this day. Nothing here could call into existence something like Thomism, whether the later be considered a triumph or a failure.

Insofar as the opposition between al-Ghazali and Averroes may with truth be defined as the opposition between the philosophy of the heart and pure speculative philosophy (bearing in mind that the equivalent of the Arabic word *'aql* is not *ratio* but *intellectus* or *Nous),* it was one that could be overcome only by something which did not reject either philosophy or the spiritual experience of Sufism. In essence, as we have seen, this was the doctrine of al-Suhrawardi. Let us not put it that he wished to overcome the Ghazali-Avicenna, Ghazali-Averroes conflict. It is only to Western eyes that this conflict can appear as decisive as that between Kant and Aristotle; al-Suhrawardi, like the Iranian thinkers, is beyond such conflicts. We have already observed how remarkable it is that in bringing together the names of Plato and Zarathustra he was three centuries ahead of the project outlined by the great Byzantine philosopher Gemistos Pletho.

4. We referred above to the presence of Ibn al-'Arabi at the transferring of Averroes' ashes to Cordoba. He retained poignant memories of the occasion. One side of the horse was laden with the coffin, and the other with Averroes' books: 'A bundle of books balancing a corpse!' In order to understand the meaning of speculative and scientific life in the traditional Islamic East, we must bear this image in mind like

an inverted symbol of its quest and its choice: 'a divine science' which triumphs over death.

It is to be regretted that for so long Islamic philosophy had been absent from our general histories of philosophy, or at any rate has been considered mainly from the point of view of what was known of it to our Latin scholastics. As we said at the beginning, in order to make this study complete we still have to take into account two further periods: that which starts with Ibn al-'Arabi and leads, by way of the 'metaphysics of Sufism', to the Safavid Renaissance in Iran, and that which starts with this Renaissance and leads down to our own day. We will be faced with the question of what is the future, in the Islamic world, of this traditional metaphysics, and what is its significance for the world.

The type of prophetic philosophy outlined at the start of this study made us aware of the meaning that should be attached to the fact that the great flowering of thought which continued in Iran after the Safavid period took place in Shiite Islam and not elsewhere. The question of its future is first and foremost a question about its role as a witness. Up until now, our histories of philosophy have never even called this witness into the witness-box. It could tell us why what happened in the West after the thirteenth century did not happen in Shiite Islam, even though it too is, as we pride ourselves on being, the product of the Bible and of Greek wisdom. A science which is capable of the unlimited conquest of the external world, but which exacts as a ransom the appalling crisis of all philosophy, the disappearance of the person and the acceptance of the void—can such a science, for this witness, weigh more heavily in the balance than 'a bundle of books balancing a corpse'?

II

From the Death of Averroes to the Present Day

General Survey

It may seem paradoxical to allocate eight centuries of philosophy, from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, to a single period. But this paradox merely throws into relief the difficulty of dividing Islamic philosophy into periods in away that corresponds to what is customary in the history of philosophy. Let us begin by observing that if we go by the Islamic computation, this interval extends from the seventh century of the Hijrah to the end of the fourteenth century; and, further, that the sense of historical time and periods cannot be altogether the same when the thinker's inner life is centred and situated in relation to the era of the Hijrah, as when it is centred and situated in relation of the Christian era. Our own schema of Antiquity, Middle Ages and Modern Times has no corresponding basis in the time of the Islamic era. Of course, we can establish concordances between the calendars; but these concordances are entirely external and purely pragmatic, and bear no relation to real, existential contemporaneity. Our first problem, then, is the problem of a satisfactory division into periods.

Averroes died in 5 95 /1198. It was long thought that his funeral was also the funeral of Islamic philosophy. This was correct in that the phase of Islamic philosophy known as 'Arab Peripateticism' came to an end with Averroes. On the other hand, this way of thinking was completely wrong in that it ignored the fact that the death of Averroes signalled the start of something new, something which is symbolized by the names of al-Suhrawardi (d. 587/1191) and Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi {d. 638/1240). This novel fact marks a decisive stage in the development of Islamic thought, in the sense that something came into being with Ibn al-'Arabi which had its source in the school of Almeria and in the Shiite and Ismaili influences, and which was to dominate the universe of Islamic thought down to the present day.

Al-Suhrawardi's 'Oriental' theosophy and Ibn al-'Arabi's mystical

theosophy brought to an end the confrontation in Sunni Islam between the theologians of the *kalam* and the Hellenizing philosophers. The current which originated with Ibn al-'Arabi differs with regard to its premisses and its implications both from the theology of the *kalam* and from Hellenizing philosophy; it differs from them both as much as they differ from each other. What is in question here is a type of thinking, of meditation and of philosophical experience which is truly Islamic in its originality. On the other hand, this current has many points of contact with previous Ismaili thought, as well as with al-Suhrawardi's ishraqi (Oriental or Illuminist') philosophy and Imamic Shiite philosophy. The current which originated with Suhrawardi, the *ishraq*, is also original in relation to the Hellenizing philosopher-logicians, and this originality has given rise to the remark that the *ishraq* is to philosophy what Sufism is to the *kalam.* These, broadly speaking, are the facts on which the internal division of Islamic philosophy into the period before and the period after the death of Averroes is based.

Certainly, as we have already suggested, this period of eight centuries can be subdivided, particularly at the point which begins the new era of the Safavid Renaissance and the school of Isfahan in the sixteenth century CE Such a subdivision is justified by the fact that although the Iranians played a crucial part from the beginning in the development of philosophical meditation in Islam, it is also the case that after the death of Averroes the centre of Islamic philosophy was definitively moved from Western Islam in Andalusia to Eastern Islam in Iran. Yet mere can be no doubt that such a subdivision is still external and exoteric. Between Haydar Amuli {fourteenth century) and Mir Damad or his followers (sixteenth century and after) there is not the difference that exists between one of our fourteenth-century scholastics and one of our Renaissance thinkers. It would be more to the point to think of a school of Chartres which continued to exist and to enrich itself down to our own days. But this comparison is not a method whereby we can 'remake' history.

As the space at our disposal here is very limited, there is a risk that in over-subdividing the period our grasp of it as a whole may also be fragmented. It will in any case be impossible for us to give a complete idea of the work of each of the philosophers mentioned; in many cases we shall be reduced merely to naming them, and a certain number will necessarily be missed out altogether. These gaps are also due to

the state of research. Imagine the task facing a historian of German philosophy if, from Kant to Heidegger, he had to work almost solely from manuscript works scattered in different libraries, or else from rare lithographic editions if he did not actually undertake to edit the works in question himself. This is more or less the situation for the historian of Islamic philosophy—and it is with the equivalent of a vast library that he has to deal.

We must specify, moreover, that we will be dealing here with traditional philosophy alone, not only for the reason given above, but so as to remain faithful to the concept itself of 'Islamic philosophy'. All the works that can be grouped under the title of 'modernism' inaugurate and constitute a chapter apart. The interest they present is often slight, depending on the degree to which Western philosophies have been assimilated by their authors. By contrast, traditional Islamic philosophy has found renewed expression in the labours of those in the West who have derived inspiration, in one way or another, from the concept of tradition and the norms that such a concept implies. Bearing in mind that a 'tradition' is transmitted in a living state only through a continual 'rebirth', it appears, as things stand at present, that even in the East the renaissance of the 'Oriental' tradition will be achieved only through the combined efforts of those in both East and West who are 'Orientals' in the true sense of the word, that is to say in the metaphysical sense understood by the *ishraqiyun.* As for the pseudo-esotericisms that nowadays abound in the West, they are the deplorable counterpart of the pseudo-Westernisms of Eastern thought. Etymologically speaking, the word 'esotericism' signifies a phenomenon which creates a spiritual communion between the three branches of the Abrahamic community; and it is the task of the philosophers to be the guardians and keepers of this communion, even when this runs counter to the 'exoteric' forces which constitute the outer appearance of History. The 'phenomenon of the sacred Book' is at the heart of their common origin—a phenomenon which betokens the high standing of prophetology, in all the forms with which philosophy can endow it.

Indeed it is with reference to this 'phenomenon of the sacred Book'—on which we have already based our concept of 'Islamic philosophy'—that we may interpret the different types of thinkers discussed in the following pages. We have already shown how the split

between Sunnism and Shiism must be viewed in relation to the 'phenomenon of the sacred Book', that is to say in relation to the Quranic Revelation—not simply because, according to Shiism, the Quran that we possess today is a mutilated form of the original, but because the truth of the holy Book in our possession must be sought at the heart of its hidden depths, in the plurality of its esoteric meanings. The key to these hidden depths is the Shiite doctrine of the Imam and of the *walayah*—the initiatic charisma of the 'Friends of God'—as the esoteric aspect of prophecy. Seen in this light, the task of philosophy is fundamentally hermeneutic.

Broadly speaking, the classification of philosophers here proposed is based on the fundamental attitude which characterizes the philosopher in question. There is the attitude of those who represent what is known as the *'kalam'* (literally 'discourse'}, that is to say, Islamic scholasticism. In the eyes of someone like Mulla Sadra Shirazi, these are the thinkers for whom the subject and the object of knowledge confront each other face to face, a confrontation continued dialectically through the medium of discursive explanations from which any sense of an attitude other than theoretical appears to be absent. In upholding Islamic dogma, these thinkers brought into play the dialectical resources which they owed to Greek philosophy, for the task confronting them was above all apologetic. The Sunni *kalam,* whether Ash'arite or Mu'tazilite, excelled in this task. Opposing them were the Hellenizing philosophers (the *falasifa),* whose theories were based, for the most part, on false premisses. There is also, to be sure, a Shiite *kalam;* but just as the situation of the philosopher is different in Sunnism and Shiism—for the traditional data or *hadith* of Shiism conceal a gnosis which requires and provokes philosophical meditation—so, too, the Shiite *kalam* does not aspire to be sufficient to itself.

There are profound connections between philosophical speculation, the commentaries on the Quran, and juridical problems. In the case of a Sunni thinker such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, for example, there is a connection between his great theological works on the *kalam* and his monumental Quranic *tafsir*. Yet the nature of this connection is determined by a theological and philosophical position which would never have satisfied Haydar Amuli and Mulla Sadra. The same imbalance is also to be sensed in the division of the Shiite canonists

into the two great schools of the *Akhbariyun* and the U*suliyun;* for the premisses concerned are not limited to canon law, but extend into philosophy. It is not accidental that great Shiite theosophers such as Muhsin Fayd and Qadi Sa'id Qummi were *Akhbariyun*. The attitude adopted by the metaphysician-theosophers goes beyond that of the theologians of the *kalam,* in that what is being envisaged and desired is a measure of certitude other than the certitude which results from the dialectic of the *kalam*.

The distance which separates the *kalam* from what is variously known as *hikmat ilahlya* (metaphysics—literally 'divine philosophy', etymologically *theosophia), 'irfan* (mystical theosophy), *hikmat ishraqiya* ('Oriental' theosophy), *hikmat yamaniya* ('Yemeni' theosophy, through the conjunction of the word Yemen with the word *Imam,* meaning faith) is the distance separating the certitude of theoretical knowledge (*'ilm al-yaqin*) and the certitude which is personally realized and lived *(haqq al-yaqin)*. Again broadly speaking, according to the teaching of Mulla Sadra Shirazi, it could be said that to traverse this distance presupposes a metamorphosis in the knowing subject. The knowing subject becomes aware of his ontological indigence—that is, he becomes aware that in order to be himself, to possess the means whereby he can be himself, his own self is not sufficient; simultaneously he becomes aware of his inability to know so long as he is left to himself, since knowing is the form itself of being. As long as there is, on the one hand, a subject, I, isolated in its ego-ness (*ananiya),* and on the other hand an object, you, a divine Being isolated and abstracted in its unknowability, there cannot be (whatever Names and Attributes are conferred upon it) a knowledge allowing access to this object.

Knowledge can accede to this object only when it is not confronted dialectically, but is revealed to the knowing subject by the subject himself. This epiphany *eo ipso* substitutes for the original subject the absolute Subject that the former was attempting to intelligize as the object of knowledge. God is never an object; he can be known only through himself as an absolute Subject, absolved of all false objectivity. The divine Subject is in fact the active subject of all knowledge of God. It is God who thinks himself in the thought that the human intellect has of him, for in this thought the 'hidden Treasure' is revealed to himself. This is so in the case of every intelligible thing

(for example, the intelligible tree is the tree which thinks itself in the form of itself that is actualized in the human intellect). This profound identity obtains for both the metaphysician and the mystic, and the dividing line between them is indistinct. Both of them experience the truth of the inspired *hadith:* 'I am the eye through which he sees, the ear through which he hears', and so on.

All this is familiar to the reader of Ibn al-'Arabi or of the thinkers related to him. In order to give the Western reader who comes upon this area of Islamic thought for the first time some idea of where he is, we could say that in certain ways it is analogous to the thought of the theologian-philosophers who during the first half of the nineteenth century were known as the 'Hegelian right', and who withdrew, if not into total oblivion, at any rate into 'occultaton', for the same reasons perhaps which have made Western researchers inattentive, uncomprehending or unjust towards whatever it is that is represented by the current of thought in Islam that has its origins in Ibn al-'Arabi. The disappearance in the West of the speculative theology of the 'Hegelian right', and the perpetuation of Ibn al-'Arabi's theosophy in Islam, are two contrasting symptoms, the reasons for which are no doubt to be sought in what ultimately differentiates the Christian phenomenon from the Islamic phenomenon.

The entire schema of the theologian-philosophers of the 'Hegelian right' was centred on the Nicean dogma of the Trinity. In Islamic theosophy, however, the Thought in which the divine Subject, in self-reflection, defines itself as being, and as revealed being *(Deus revelatus),* is not a 'second person' consubstantial with the 'first'. Remote from any concept of 'homoousia' (consubstantiality), this philosophy follows the way of Quranic Christology, which is itself modelled on the Christology of Arius. The initial theophany is the first and most sublime of creatures (the *Protoktistos),* but it is a creature, whatever name is used to designate it *{haqq makhluq,* the created God; *haqiqah muhammadiya,* metaphysical Muhammadan Reality; *Nur muhammadi,* Muhammadan Light; *'aql awwal,* First Intelligence of the Pleroma). From another point of view, it may be observed that Eastern Orthodoxy, in rejecting the fi*lioque,* maintained the balance between the priestly function and the prophetic function, but the theologians of the 'Hegelian right' were not theologians of Eastern Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, *mutatis mutandis,* we can perceive in the

balance thus maintained an analogy to the balance maintained by Shiite theosophy at the heart of the concept of the *haqiqah muhammadiya:* the balance between its two aspects, the exoteric and the esoteric, or between the aspect of the religious Law revealed by a prophet and the aspect of the Spirit who is its interpreter—between the vocation of the Prophet and the vocation of the Imam whose *walayah* is the esoteric aspect of prophecy. Each of the twelve Imams, according to the *hadith,* can say that he is the Face of God revealed to man, the theophany; and he is simultaneously the Face that man displays to God, for he is the form of his faith. As a result, theophany affirms the problem of being neither as infinitive (to be) nor as substantive (being), but in the imperative mood *(esto).* As the initial theophany, the *Protoktistos is* himself this primordial Imperative, and this is why the epiphany is by its essence creatural. All this produces a radical difference in the concept of 'history'.

It is possible to develop a 'philosophy of history' on the basis of the dogma of the Incarnation regarded as an event within the course of history. It is difficult to develop a philosophy of history out of theophanies conceived as visionary events. What these events really call for is a 'historiosophy'. A philosophy of history is even able to be quite frankly agnostic; it may in the end recognize only an immanent causality in the web of events perceived at the level of the empirical world. At this point, the secularization of the absolute Spiritis complete. On the other hand, metaphysics and historiosophy are incompatible with any form of agnosticism. Historiosophy presupposes a perception of events on a level other than that of the empirical world (as our authors would say: on the visionary level of the *malakut);* essentially, it is in pursuit of spiritual energies and higher universes whose traces are imprinted on our world. The facts of historiosophy are those of a hierohistory: the Shiite division into periods of the cycle of prophecy and the cycle of the *walayah* or of spiritual initiation, Ibn al-'Arabi's typology of the prophets—these are all ways of thematizing facts which are not the concern of what in the West goes by the name of 'philosophy of history', but which are the concern of historiosophy. They are some of the many classifying terms indispensible for all comparative phenomenology when it is a question of contextualizing the thought or the thinkers we are dealing with here.

There are also grounds for saying that when we establish a correspondence between what is called 'speculative theology' in the West and what in Islam constitutes the theosophical metaphysics of esotericism, we become aware of the inadequacy of our terms 'philosophy' and 'theology', a serious inadequacy in that it separates two things which, from the point of view of our thinkers, cannot be isolated from each other. The true meaning of the word 'speculative' can only be understood in relation to *speculum,* the intelligence of speculative theology fulfils the function of a mirror reflecting God, a mirror in which God reveals himself {'to speculate is to reflect', *spekulieren heisst spiegeln,* F. von Baader). Islamic theosophy contains the perfect equivalent of all this: the mirror *(mir'ah)*—a fundamental theme—is the inner man to whom, by whom and for whom the theophany *(tajalli, zuhur)* takes place, and who is the place and form *{mazhar)* of this theophany. It is epiphany, not incarnation: the "image is shown in the mirror, not incarnated in it. The idea of a mirror also involves the idea of interiority, of the esoteric. What is speculative is esoteric. For this reason, the term which corresponds most closely with the elements composing the term *hikmat ilahiya* and which most adequately translates it, is the word 'theosophy' rather than philosophy or theology. This simple reminder puts paid to any objection which attempts to exclude theosophy from the domain of philosophy. Here, the theosopher's intention is to take philosophy to its furthest limits; otherwise, as far as our thinkers are concerned, philosophy is not worth the trouble. The philosophical exercise of the intellect (*'aql),* the theological realization of transmitted traditions *(naql),* are only accomplished by a third activity: *kashf,* meaning discovery, revelation, intuitive or visionary perception of what is revealed in the 'mirror'.

We cannot examine here how this schema operates in the case of all our 'speculative' thinkers. But this summary that we have given may indicate to the philosopher the significance of the mystical epic of the Spirit represented by the course of Islamic philosophy from the time of Suhrawardi and Ibn al-'Arabi, and may help him to orientate himself in the labyrinth of information which must of necessity be concise and allusive. All that we have just been saying with regard to the divine epiphany and the epiphanic function of being and the forms of being applies as much to Shiite, Imamite or Ismaili theosophy as to Sufi metaphysics. Some differences, however, do exist.

The first of these stems from the fact that, as a result of the numerical process of distribution, most Sufism is to be found among the Sunni majority. Sufism is nevertheless considered by Shiite theosophers as *volens nolens* representing the thought and the spirituality which originated in the teaching of the holy Imams. Haydar Amuli took it upon himself to remind us forcibly of this very fact. For his part, the seeker today can but remember what the school of Almeria represented for Ibn al-'Arabi. From the point of view of a Shiite, certain aspects of the Sufi metaphysic resemble aspects of an Imamology which either cannot or dares not openly declare itself.

Secondly, there have of course been Shiite Sufis in abundance. The word *tariqah* means 'way', and it was the name given to the Sufi congregations as 'materializations' of the way. There have been, and there still exist in active form, Shiite Sufi *turuq.* Yet there have been, and there still are, many Shiite theosophers who speak the same language as the Sufis, but who try not to be mistaken for them and have never professed to belong to an organized *tariqah.* As we said above, the main reason for this is that, unlike the Sunni believer, the Shiite believer has embarked on the spiritual or mystical path by virtue of being in receipt of the Imams' esoteric teaching. A second reason is that by means of a sort of pious agnosticism (there is such a thing), a certain type of Sufism was enabled to despise knowledge. Mulla Sadra himself wrote a book attacking it, and it was one of the symptoms of the crisis through which Sufism passed during the Safavid period. As a result, the notion of *tasawwuf or* Sufism does not cover the phenomenon of mysticism (speculative and experimental) in Islam in its entirety, as is customarily thought to be the case in the West. Hence the common usage of the terms *'irfan* and *'urafa,* which are still the terms preferred in Iran today.

After this brief survey, the no less brief account which follows will be arranged under three chapter headings.

Firstly, there is Sunni thought, which includes all those thinkers in the tradition of the *falasifa* as well as the scholastics of the *kalam* and their opponents.

Secondly, there is the metaphysics of Sufism, meaning the 'speculative' metaphysics mentioned above, which consists not in pondering on abstract logical concepts but in penetrating the supra sensible worlds and events. We are concerned here with spiritual men of both Sunni

and Shiite persuasion, as well as with those whose loyalties are ambiguous. This chapter will act as a massive link with the third.

Thirdly, we come to Shiite thought, beginning with Nasir al-Din Tusi, and reaching a peak with the school of Isfahan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries CE. The labours of this school have extended over four centuries, and its example today has the character of a summons to a palingenesis.

I. Sunni Thought

A. THE PHILOSOPHERS

1. AL-ABHARI

Proceeding in accordance with a wholly exterior chronology, determined by the date of the death of the philosophers with whom we are concerned, the first to be named is Athir al-Din Mufaddal al-Abhari, who died around 663/1264, philosopher, mathematician and astronomer. Very little is known about his life, which he seems to have spent partly in Mosul and partly in Asia Minor. His books are few in number, but they have considerable importance in that they were used as text books and were frequently commentated. He wrote a *Kitab al-Isagughi*, an adaptation of the *Isagogue* by Porphyry, which was commentated by Shams al-Din al-Fanari (834/1470). His *Guide to Philosophy (Hidayat al-hikmah)* was in three parts (logic, physics and metaphysics), and, among others, Husayn al-Maybudi wrote a commentary on it in 880/1475. But the most important of all the commentaries on it, and much the most widely read in Iran, is the very personal commentary written by Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi. Another work by al-Abhari, the *Al-Kashf al-haqa'iq* (The Discovery of Metaphysical Realities) reveals the philosopher's *ishraqi* affinities. The work is constructed according to a plan which is the inverse of the plan most commonly utilized: first he explains logic, then metaphysics, and ends with physics. It is noteworthy in that the eschatological section of the metaphysics is a literal reproduction of certain pages written by al-Suhrawardi the *Shaykh al-Ishraq*.

2. IBN SAB'IN

With this philosopher, we bid a final farewell to Andalusia. Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Haqq ibn Sab'in was born in Murcia in 614/1217-1218. He was thus part-contemporary with Ibn al-'Arabi, who was himself born in Murcia in 560/1165, and like him he emigrated to the East. He stayed at first in Ceuta in Morocco, and then went to

die in Mecca in 669/1270. His destiny epitomizes that of a bold and tormented philosopher, both in the lustre attached to his memory by his devoted disciples and faithful admirers, and in the deep-seated hatred, harassments and persecutions which are the lot of men such as he in this world. Finally, his Visigothic ancestry places him among the most illustrious and authentic representatives of Islamic civilization in Andalusia.

The force of his personality is apparent in the fact that his teaching brought into being a school of thought with its own distinctive features, while at the same time it incorporated what was common to the philosophers and mystics of Islam. The disciples of this school were called *Sab'Iniyun,* after the name of their teacher. Chief amongst them was the figure of al-Shushtari (d. 668/1269), 'a poet with the spontaneity of a Verlaine', as L. Massignon describes him, who was born at Cadiz and lived and died in near Damietta in the Maghreb. One of his poems speaks of the *isnad,* the spiritual genealogy which the *Sab'Iniyun* attributed to themselves. Not only does it include the names of al-Suhrawardi and Ibn al-'Arabi but, in common with al-Suhrawardi, they claim to be spiritually descended from Hermes, and in this way the school of Ibn Sab'in reveals affinities with the tendencies of the *ishraqiyun* {see above, HI, 3). It is to be hoped that future researches will throw more light on the secret of the death that Ibn Sab'in chose of his own free will. He committed suicide at Mecca, it is said, 'because he desired to be united with God'. He opened his veins, let the blood drain out, and breathed his last on the 2nd Shawwal 669/19th May 1270—thirty years, therefore, after the death in Damascus in 1240 of his illustrious Murcian compatriot, Ibn al-'Arabi.

It was during his stay at Ceuta that Ibn Sab'in was ordered by the Muwahhid sovereign 'Abd al-Wahid al-Rashid to reply to a questionnaire which came from the emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, king of Sicily. This is the origin of the title given to the work: *Discourse on the Sicilian Questions (al-Masa'il al-siqilliyah).* In fact, Ibn Sab'in's fame in the West up till now is due to this work. The emperor asked four questions: on the existence of the world *ab aeterno,* on the premisses and the essence of theology, on the Categories, and on the nature and immortality of the soul. The last question is in the form of an appendix in which the emperor asks about the divergences between Aristotle and his commentator Alexander of Aphrodisius. The

significance of this correspondence is more marked when it is set in the context, on the one hand, of Ibn Sab'in's works and of Islamic philosophy, and on the other hand in its Western context of Frederick II' s unlimited curiosity as a seeker after truth, his dream of an 'imperial theology' based on the idea of the Perfect Man as the centre of the world—the cosmic *imperator—and* also on a messianism whose relationship with the messianism of the Joachimites (the disciples of Joachim of Fiore) could only be one of violent opposition.

We must, however, await the appearance of the long-expected editions of his work in order to set Ibn Sab'in in his context. His main work, the *Budd al-'arif* (which means something like *The Escape of the Gnostic),* together with the key to it *(Miftah Budd al- 'arif,* preserved in a *unicum* in Eminye, Bursa), is full of bold and original perceptions. His portrayals of al-Farabi, Avicenna, al-Ghazali and Averroes represent the first attempt in Islamic philosophy at psychological interpretation. All these works should have been edited long ago. The philosophers who come next take us back from Andalusia to Iran.

3. AL-KATIBI AL-QAZWINI

Najm al-Din 'Ali al-Katibi al-Qazwini (d. 675/1276), who is known both by the Arabic form of his surname, *Katib* (the writer or clerk) and by its Persian form *Dabiran,* is one of the eminent philosophers, astronomers and mathematicians of the time. In philosophy, he was one of the teachers of al-'Allamah al-Hilli and Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi, and was himself a pupil of Nasir al-Din Tusi (see below, HI, 1). In 657/1259, he took part in the project of constructing the observatory of Maraghah in Azerbaijan, a project initiated by the Mongol sovereign Hulagu Khan. For a long time he taught at Qazwin. He was a Shafi'ite, and since this ritual or juridical school has a particular affinity with Shiism, he appears to have been strongly attracted by the latter, an attraction reinforced by his admiration for Nasir al-Din Tusi. We are indebted to him for a certain number of works on the philosophical sciences. His *Kitab Hikmat al- 'ayn,* which encompasses all the metaphysical and mystical questions, was commentated by' Allamah al-Hilli and others. His most often quoted work is the *Risalat al-shamsiyah,* a textbook on logic which was the subject of many commentaries, including those written by Sa'd al-Taftazani and Qutb al-Din al-Razi.

4. RASHID AL-DIN FADL-ALLAH

Rashid al-Din Fadl-Allah was born in Hamadan around 645/1247, and died tragically at Tabriz in 718/1318: he was executed, following the intrigues of his enemies, on the orders of Sultan Abu Sa'id, ninth Ilkhan of Persia. He was a universal genius, although his fame hitherto has rested mainly on his work as an eminent historian. He first practised medicine under the reign of the Mongol sovereign Abagha Khan (1265-1282), and then became court historian under Ghazan Khan (1295-1304). On the latter's orders, he undertook to write his monumental work of history, entitled *Jami' al-tawarikh* (*The Synthesis of Chronicles).* Soon, the concept of the work expanded and assumed the proportions of a universal history, but it remained incomplete (there are manuscripts of it in existence with splendid miniatures). In it, he demonstrates the same extraordinary breadth of knowledge that had made him famous as a doctor; he always goes to the source in search of information at first hand, which he gains from a *bhikshu* when he is talking about India, and from Chinese scholars when he is talking about China. He equals Leonardo da Vinci in the variety of his astonishing researches; he wrote a lengthy work—sadly, not yet discovered—which deals with meteorology, arboriculture, horticulture, and boat-building *(Kitab al-Ahya' wa al-athar).*

In addition to all this—already a fair illustration of his creative activity—there is a side of his work which is still unedited, and which more directly concerns the philosopher and the history of philosophy. This consists of a group of four books dealing with philosophy and mystical theology, commentaries on the Quran, and so on, together with a collection of letters with alternating questions on theology and medicine.

In November 1969, a congress of Iranologjsts was held at the universities of Tehran and Tabriz to commemorate the six hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Rashid al-Din's death. The resolutions that were passed permit one to hope that within a reasonable length of time these unedited works will be published.

S. QUTB AL-DIN AL-RAZI

Qutb al-Din al-Razi (Muhammad ibn 'Ail Ja'far), who died in 766/1364, was one of the philosophers of the period whose name

is particularly well-known. According to some, he was descended from the Buyid princes of Daylam, and according to others from the great Shiite family of the Babuyah of Qumm (to which the famous Shaykh-i Saduq belonged). He was one of the most famous disciples of al-'Allamah al-Hilli. He left about fifteen works and commentaries, the most important of which for the history of Iranian Avicennism is his *Kitab al-Muhakamat* (literally, the *Book of Summonses).* In it, he sets out to make an assessment and give a ruling on the divergences of the two great commentaries written on Avicenna's *Book of Instructions (Isharat),* those by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and Nasir al-Din Tusi respectively.

Nevertheless, in spite of the eulogies bestowed on Qutb al-Din by his master al-'Allamah al-Hilli in the personal diploma *(ijazah)* that he conferred on him, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Lahiji, a pupil of Mulla Sadra al-Shirazi and himself the author of a vast and very personal commentary on the *Isharat,* affirms that Qutb al-Din al-Razi did not really possess the necessary ability to grasp the deeper significance on Nasir al-Din Tusi's meditation on Avicenna's work.

B. THE THEOLOGIANS OF THE KALAM

1. FAKHR AL-DIN AL-RAZI

The name al-Razi always indicates a person or family originating from the ancient city of Rayy (the Ragha of the *Avesta,* the Rages of the *Book of Tobits)*, which is about a dozen kilometres south of Tehran. Fakhr al-Din, who was born at Rayy in 543/1149, was a great traveller. He went to Khwarazm and Transoxiana, where he engaged in a lively dispute with the Mu'tazilites. He lived in Bukhara, then in Herat, where he opened a school, then in Samarqand, then in India, then finally and definitely at Herat, where he died in 606/1209.

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi was a complex character, who set himself to master and resolve the different currents of thought in Islam. Whether he was equal to the task was something about which al-Suhrawardi, the *Shaykh al-ishraq,* who had known him very well in his youth, was not certain. He was an Ash'arite, but at the same time he was opposed to atomism; he was profoundly versed in the Hellenizing philosophers (al-Farabi, Avicenna; his work also contains important quotations from Aba al-Barakat al-Baghdadi), and he **makes use** of all **the** resources

of their dialectic in constructing his vast dogmatic synthesis. 'For him, philosophy and theology are reconciled in a Platonic system which, in the final analysis, derived from an interpretation of the *Timaeus'*, says P. Kraus. In judging it, we must return to the source of his metaphysics of being. On the one hand, there is the avowal that as of right, Logic has access to the essences or quiddities; this is what one might call the Platonic tendency. On the other hand, there is an ontology which remains on the level of the metaphysics of essence, and which views existence as something which is added to essence from outside. Of course, in that it 'is' a quiddity in some form or other, quiddity is already provided with a certain being, and this act of being would be enough to make it the active cause of its existence. But being is not intrinsic to quiddity; and this is why thought distinguishes between essence and existence. Nevertheless, quiddity possesses what suffices for existence by virtue of the fact that it is constituted at all. The problem is broached with an open mind with respect to Avicenna. But Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's solution to it would hardly go uncriticized by Mulla Sadra Shirazi, who was to bring about a radical revolution in the metaphysics of being.

Fakhr al-Razi left a considerable body of works, consisting of fifteen or so treatises whose scope extends over the *kalam*, philosophy and Quranic exegesis, as well as medicine, astrology, alchemy, physiognomy and mineralogy. We must confine ourselves here to mentioning first and foremost his commentary on the *Isharat* (the *Book of Instructions)* by Avicenna, and the searching critique by Nasir Tusi of this commentary. As we said above, Qutb al-Din al-Razi was later to attempt to 'arbitrate' between them. Secondly, there is his *'Summa' (Muhassal)* of the doctrines of the philosophers *(hukama')* and the scholastics of the *kalam* (the *mutakallimun),* both ancient and modern. Thirdly, there is a very lengthy work entitled *Oriental Questions {Mabahith mashriqiya),* but the meaning of the word 'Oriental' is imprecise, and is in any case quite different from the technical meaning of the *Ishraqiyun.* It is a general survey of the *kalam* in three books: on being and its properties, on the broad categories of non-necessary being, and on the Necessary Being (rational theology). Fourthly, there is another, unedited, Summa of four chapters, written for his eldest son Mahmud. Fifthly, there is a book about the disputes *(munadalat)* in which he engaged more or less everywhere he went during his travels

with representatives of nearly all the schools of thought. The sixth work is his vast commentary on the Quran *(Mafatih al-ghayb)* in eight large quarto volumes, which also attains the rank of a Summa through the proliferation of the issues it raises and the research it contains. It is not to be wondered at that as in the case of so many other prolific thinkers, no study has yet been made of the work in its entirety.

The reconciliation attempted by Fakhr al-Razi is 'possibly less an attempt at reconciling the doctrines... than an endeavour to provide a common area of thought for minds of a different stamp— The reconciliation is less between reason and faith than between the philosopher and the believer' (R. Arnaldez). This may constitute an excellent programme of 'comparative philosophy'; but in elaborating it, Fakhr al-Razi had only the *kalam* at his disposal, an apologetic dialectic which can in no way achieve the metamorphosis of the subject brought about by speculative or esoteric philosophy (in the technical sense of these words as defined in our general survey). Although it is only in terms of this latter philosophy that the problem can be surmounted, Fakhr al-Razi deploys only the resources of the discursive intellect, and the transforming union between the human intellect and the active Intelligence or Holy Spirit is not achieved. It is most indicative in this respect that Fakhr al-Razi does not even seem to be aware of the metaphysical conception of the Imam and the Imamate as this is professed by the Shiite philosophers. Sadra al-Shirazi's detailed critique of this fact is particularly worthy of note.

In short, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi is a typical *mutakallim,* the perfect scholastic of the dialectic of the *kalam.* He was widely read; his *Muhassal* was studied by both Ibn Taymiyah and Ibn Khaldun. Ibn al-'Arabi corresponded with him. Even in the West, the Spanish Dominican Ramon Marti (thirteenth century) quoted him in his *Pugio fidei.*

2. AL-IJI

'Adud al-Din al-Iji, also an Iranian and an eminent representative of the philosophy and theology of the *kalam,* was born around 700/1300 at Ij, near Shiraz in Fars (Persia), at a time when the first wave of the Mongol invasion had ebbed. He was a judge (qadi) and professor *(mudarris)* at Shiraz, and he died there in 756/1355, a prisoner in (he fortress of Diraimiyan, on the mountain overlooking his native land.

Of the influences which dominated his philosophical and theological thinking, pride of place must be given to his teacher Ahmad ibn Hasan al-Jarabardi (d. 746/1345} and the work of al-Baydawi (d. *ca.* 685/1286). Besides a commentary on the Quran which has become a classic, the latter wrote a compendium of the *kalam* with the title *Matali' al-anwar* (*The Rising of the Lights;* here again, this term contains no *ishraqi* connotations). Al-Iji's main work is a Summa of the *kalam,* the *Kitab al-Mawaqif {the Book of Stations),* which consists of six great divisions or 'stations': (1) The theory of knowledge. (2) General principles concerning the science of being. (3) The theory of accidents, that is to say of categories other than substance. (4) The substances, and the theory of simple and composite bodies, of the Elements, and of the celestial bodies. (5) The theory of the soul, of the intellect and of the angelic Intelligences, and rational Theology (divine Essence, divine Names and attributes, divine operations). (6) Prophetology and eschatology. (Together with the commentaries, the edition of the *Mawaqif* which came out in Cairo in 1325 AH runs to eight books in four large quarto volumes.)

Is it possible to say that al-Iji truly constructed a 'Summa' of the *kalam,* in the sense that the work both of St. Thomas Aquinas and of Mulla Sadra Shirazi are Summae, implying the idea of a personal system in which the writer's own thoughts dominate the work from beginning to end? Perhaps no *mutakallim,* not even Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, has possessed the ability to construct such a system. In spite of this reservation, we can say that al-lji compiled a philosophical-theological encyclopaedia for his time, within the field and perspective of the *kalam* of course. It could justifiably be said that at that time the *kalam,* considered in itself, was exhausted. But we must not lose sight of two other considerations: firstly, our authors should not be accused of multiplying the number commentaries and glosses. As we shall have occasion to repeat, this, for them, constituted 'research'. To adhere to a text was not indicative of an inability to think for oneself, but the most direct way to express one's thoughts on a certain number of given points. Secondly, we must remember that al-Iji was contemporary with al-Simnani, with whom the metaphysics of Sufism reached a peak, and with Haydar Amuli, with whom Shiite philosophy, influenced by the thinking of Ibn al-'Arabi, flowered anew. Considered in itself, perhaps, the *kalam* seems clogged up with *madrasa* scholasti

cism; but we must seek the living thought in other currents. The Shiite metaphysicians were to dominate the *kalam,* philosophical metaphysics and mystical theosophy, and the *kalam* was thus enabled to continue in existence as a fertile propaedeutic.

Al-Iji's *Mawaqif were* commentated by his pupils, the most famous of whom was Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani. But the classical commentary on the work was written by a thinker who did not belong to his immediate circle of followers: Mir Sharif al-Jurjani.

3. AL-TAFTAZANI

Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, al-Iji's disciple and commentator, was born in 722/1322 at Taftazan, a town of Khurasan in north-eastern Iran, and died at Samarqand in 792/1390. He wrote several manuals which have remained in use down to our day among the *madrasa,* one of which is the famous *Risalat al-shamsiyah,* a commentary on the treatise on logic composed by al-Katibi al-Qazwihi. He was an Ash'arite, but he was open-minded enough to tackle the explosive questions floating in the wake of polemics. In particular we should note the position he adopted with regard to the serious question of free will and predestination—a question that was the subject of passionate dispute in Islam, although it had never been doubted that man is invested with moral responsibility and is responsible for himself in the sight of God. Man and God both participate in human actions; every action is not a monolithic operation but a very complex process. Al-Taftazani was fervently convinced that God and man participate in these actions not metaphorically, but in a real sense. God is the creator of human actions, in the sense that he bestows on man the concomitant power to perform the action he has chosen. Al-Taftazani is possibly closer on this point to the school of al-Maturidi than to the Ash'arite school.

The relationships of philosophers to one another are not always easy. Al-Taftazani had taken the step of introducing his friend and colleague Mir Sharif al-Jurjani to Shah Shuja' at Shiraz, in 779/1377. When Tamerlane (Timur-i Leng) seized the town, both men were taken to Samarqand. The two friends were invited to hold an oratorical tournament, a great session of public 'debate', in Tamerlane's presence. Their friendship did not survive it.

4. AL-JURJANI

Mir Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani came from a family which was originally from Astarabad, and was born in 740/1339 at Gurgan, south-east of the Caspian Sea. *Jurjan* and *Jurjani are* transcriptions corresponding to the Arabic pronunciation of the Persian words. His is one of the great names of the time. He had been the pupil of Qutb al-Din al-Razi, and he was the teacher of Jalaal al-Din al-Dawwani. He was a great traveller: in 766/1365 he was at Herat, then in Egypt; in 776/1374 he visited Constantinople, and then went to Shiraz, where he was appointed professor in 779/1377 by Shah Shuja'. Mention has just been made of his forced migration to Samarqand and its consequences. On the death of Tamerlane in 1405, he returned to Shiraz, where he died in 816/1413, after a full life. Apart from his journeys, he wrote around twenty-five works which made him famous, because most of them consisted mainly of technical works which have been used for centuries as textbooks by young philosophers and theologians. We referred above to his great commentary on al-Iji's *Mawaqif.* Apart from this, we can name here only his *Book of Definitions {Kitab al-Ta'rifat.* This work, which is still of great value, is the embryo of the future great dictionary of the technical terminology of philosophers writing in Arabic—a project which will involve the perusal of thousands and thousands of pages, and will probably not be undertaken for a long time to come.

With Shiite fervour, Qadi Nur Allah al-Shushtari, in his great work *Majalis al-mu'minin,* the *Assemblies of Believers,* aligned as many scholars as possible to the Imamite cause. One of these scholars was Mir Sharif al-Jurjani, whom Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhshi (d. 869/1465), the eponym of the Sufi dynasty *(silsila)* of the *Nurbakhshiya,* and Ibn Abi Jumhur al-Ahsa'i held to be Shiite. It seems, however, that he was a Sunni. His son, on the other hand, Sayyid Shams al-Din, was a Shiite, while his grandson Mirza Makhdum was a Sunni. As we shall have occasion to repeat, the 'discipline of the arcane', observed by the Shiites in response to the vicissitudes of the times, often makes it difficult to decide questions of adherence.

C. THE ADVERSARIES OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

IBN TAYMIYAH AND HIS FOLLOWERS

The philosopher cannot altogether ignore the attacks of those who, for whatever reason, dispute the legitimacy of his research, and their arguments are in some sense a negative view of the history of philosophy. Seen in this light, agnosticism is a perpetual phenomenon, and is differentiated only by the motives to the negation that it perpetuates. These motives may appear contradictory in relation to each other, but in the eyes of the philosopher this does not make them less collusive in effect. There is modern agnosticism, derived from the many forms taken by criticism and positivism, and which has recourse to psychoanalysis, sociology and linguistics in order to prohibit all philosophy from affirming any other-worldly reality, because it is claimed out of hand that what is 'real' does not pertain to the sphere of metaphysics. Yet there is also the agnosticism professed by pious believers, an agnosticism which rejects the questions raised by the philosophers and condemns any attempt to raise such questions as 'rationalism', even when the philosopher's attitude is explicitly hostile to 'rationalism'. These pious agnostics are represented in all 'communities of the Book' *(ahl al-kitab),* in all three branches of the Abrahamic tradition. The 'objective' complicity between these different forms of agnosticism requires closer study. The metaphysician cannot hope to convince either side; any discussion is doomed to sterility, for it is a question hot of argument but of aptitude. All he can do is to bear witness to the vision of the world which is forced upon him, because he is its instrument. Only thus can he ensure the *traditio lampadis.*

Ibn Taymiyah, who was born at Harran in Mesopotamia in 661/1263, and who died in prison in Damascus in 728/1328, was a Hanbalite theologian, and consequently a representative of the line most antagonistic to that of the philosophers. He was a polemicist and a fighter, and he challenged everything and everyone with spirit and courage. In reading him, the metaphysician is at least able to grasp what it is in his own work which will always be incomprehensible to the non-philosopher. And when a character like Ibn Taymiyah proves to be the inspiration, through his writings, of the so-called modern Hanbalite renaissance a few centuries later—that is, the Wahhabite movement

in the eighteenth century and the *salafi* reform in the nineteenth century—then the philosopher must agree that such a character merits his particular attention.

One of his most famous teachers was Shaykh Shams al-Din al-Maqdisi, the great qadi *of* the Hanbalites in Damascus after 663/1265. Ibn Taymiyah's work is considerable, and has been studied in detail by H. Laoust. Unfortunately, we can do no more here than mention a few of the titles. There is his treatise against the Sufi brotherhood of the Rifa'iyah at Damascus, written before he left for Egypt in 705/1305. While he was in Egypt (705/1305-712/1312), he wrote his famous *Refutation of the Logicians {Radd al-mantiqiyin),* which is an attempt to destroy the logic of the Greeks and the main theses of the great philosophers, notably of al-Farabi, Avicenna and Ibn Sab'in. But his most important and characteristic work is the *Minhaj al-Sunnah {The Way of Sunnism),* which he wrote between 716/1316 and 720/1320. This is a massive and methodical polemic against the *Minhaj al-karamah (The Way of Charisma)* by al-'Allamah al-Hilli (726/1326), the famous theologian and pupil of Nasir al-Din Tusi.

Needless to say, Shiism survived the attack perfectly well, in as lively a fashion as philosophy survived the attacks of al-Ghazali. But Ibn Taymiyah's work is of great interest when it comes to understanding the fundamental contrast between the Sunni and the Shiite conceptions of Islam. Comparison is impossible, however, because everything here takes place on the level of the *kalam,* not on the level of the theosophical metaphysics of Haydar Amuli or Sadra Shirazi. Nevertheless, the work is a rich source of information about the various schools of thought as the author understood them, fuelling as they did his indignation. A propos of Avicenna, he criticizes those who make the Creator the absolute Being, conditioned by his very absoluteness; a propos of Ibn Sab'in, he criticizes those who conceive the relationship between the Necessary Being and non-necessary, creatural being as the relationship between matter and form; a propos of Ibn al-'Arabi, he attacks those who distinguish between existence in actuality and the simple, positive reality of essences (Ibn al-'Arabi's *a'yan thabita* or eternal haecceities); a propos of Sadr al-Din al-Qunyawi, he attacks those who identify Necessary Being with absolute, and thus unconditioned, being; and so on.

We must at least make mention of the most faithful of his disciples,

the Hanbalite Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (d. 751/1350), who taught and commentated his works and who accompanied him twice to prison. We should also mention his *Kitab al-Ruh,* a great *Book of the Spirit,* whose subject is the Spirits *[arwah)* of the dead and the living. Like his other works, of which there are seven or eight, this is worthy of more than a mere analysis.

D. THE ENCYCLOPAEDISTS

1. ZAKARIYA' AL-QAZWINI

We must find a place here for those whom we have grouped under the general heading of 'encyclopaedists'. The first two in this category, in particular, illustrate the same 'phenomenon of the world' as the philosophers, but they go more profoundly into the details and the points of view that the philosophers had no need to express in their treatises on physics and metaphysics—in spite of the fact that, as we said above, several of them were truly encyclopaedic in spirit. These details are important for phenomenological research, which is based on the rule of *sozein ta phainomena,* saving the appearances—that is to say, of taking account of the underlying ground of the phenomena, as these phenomena appear to those to whom they appear. The phenomenologist is not interested in material data as such—it is too easy to say of such data that they are 'out of date' (our modern scientific data go out of date with the greatest facility after ten years have passed). What the phenomenologist endeavours to discover is the primordial linage—the *Imago mundi a priori*—which is the organ and form of perception of these phenomena. Thus the interest that our authors possess is permanent.

From this point of view, the work of Zakariya' al-Qazwini is of a rare richness. He was born at Qazvin, about a hundred and fifty kilometres west of Tehran, studied under Athir al-Din al-Abhari, and died in 682/1283. He was a man of insatiable curiosity, alive to everything that came his way, and always in search of new information. His work is difficult to place; it is 'cosmography' in the broadest etymological sense of the word, encompassing both the cosmos and all the sciences concerned with every form and level of manifestation.

He wrote two great works: firstly, *Athar al-bilad wa akhbar al-'ibda,* which could be **translated** as *Monuments and Men,* a vast anthology

of all available information on the themes proposed in the title the 'traces' of which exist in different countries and the information we possess about men. Secondly: *'Aja'ib al-makhluqat wa ghara'ib al-mawjudat, The Marvels of Creation and the Curiousness of Beings,* or better still, *Marvellous Creatures and Curious Beings.* This work was written in Arabic, and exists in Persian translations. The best we can do here is to glance very briefly at this 'cosmography'.

The work is divided into two lengthy books, the first of which is concerned with the realities of the worlds above, and the second with the realities of the worlds below. In order to carry out its encyclopaedic programme, Book I begins with a long account of astronomy, treating of the particularities of each of the nine Spheres, and leads up to the two sciences which are allied with astronomy: angelology, with the different categories of Angels and celestial Spirits, and chronology, the science of time in its essence and in its forms of manifestation, discussing the different sorts of computation, eras and calendars. Book II deals with the world of the Elements: the sphere of Fire and meteors, the sphere of Air and general meteorology (rain, wind and lightning), the sphere of Water, with a description of the oceans, the seas and the animals which people them, and the sphere of Earth, describing geography in general (the seven climes and orography). Then comes mineralogy (metals and minerals); botany and the properties of plants; zoology; anthropology in all its aspects: the essence of man and of the thinking soul, ethics, embryology, man's anatomy and physiology, the organs of inner and outer perception, the intellective faculties. This chapter contains the theory of the intellects as professed by the philosophers: the innate intellect, the intellect *in habitu,* the acquired intellect, and the intellect *in actu.* Then comes the chapter on races and nations, together with their customs; human actions and activities (see below, III, 8, the work of Mir Findiriski}; scientific instruments (the astrolabe, talismans); chemistry; perfumes; defence against harmful animals and against the activities of jinn and evil spirits; fantastic and supernatural animals.

The book is thus a 'mirror' of all the knowledge in the world, as the awareness of the time perceived it through its immanent *Imago.* We should add that along with the manuscripts of Persian epics, in their triple form of heroic, romanesque and mystical, the manuscripts of al-Qazwini's work are *par excellence* among those which inspired

the work of the miniaturists, up until the time of the Qajars. From this point of view also, they are of extreme interest to the philosopher in showing the active Imagination at work.

2. SHAMS AL-DIN MUHAMMAD AL-AMULI

We do not know the exact dates of the birth and death of this other encyclopaedic thinker, who came from Amul, a province of Tabaristan to the south of the Caspian Sea (not to be confused with Sayyid Haydar Amuli: see pp.332-5). He lived in the eighth/fourteenth century, and was contemporary with al-Iji, with whom he had discussions and exchanged points of view. Moreover, as in the case of many of his contemporaries who observed the Shiite 'discipline of the arcane', some of his remarks have been interpreted as coming sometimes from a Sunni and sometimes from a Shiite. In 716/1316, at the end of the reign of Uljaytu (Sultan Muhammad Khudabindah), brother of Sultan Muhammad Ghazan Khan, he was professor at the *madrasa* of Sultaniyah in Azerbaijan. He wrote a commentary on the medical encyclopaedia of Sharaf al-Din al-Ilaqi and on Avicenna's medical *Qanun.* But he is best known for his vast encyclopaedia, entitled *Nafa'is al-funun* (something along the lines of *The Precious,* or *The Select Sciences).*

In its totality, this encyclopaedia brings together the description, history and analysis of one hundred and twenty-five sciences (the old lithographic edition comprised a folio volume of more than five hundred pages; the new typographical edition of Tehran consists of three large volumes in 8°). The work is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the sciences of the Ancients, that is to say, the classical sciences which originated with the Greeks and which continued or developed in Islam. The second part deals with the Islamic sciences proper, which arose in response to the requirements of Islam. We lack the space here to cast even a brief glimpse at this work, as we did in the case of Zakariya' al-Qazwini. An analytical study of it would meet an urgent need, if only in order to compare it with the work of Mir Findiriski, which is later and infinitely more limited in scope, and, more directly, with the plan followed by Ibn Khaldun.

3. IBN KHALDUN

This eminent thinker **deserves** to be classed **along** with the encyclo-

paedists, both for his breadth of mind and for the scope of his completed work. He deserves it all the more in that Western historians have attributed an extraordinary status to him (the bibliography on him is considerable). It was always understood that after Averroes, Islamic philosophy ran into the sands. The only figure to emerge from this desert a few centuries later was Ibn Khaldun. He was praised as a precursor who broke with traditional Islamic culture, and who had, unfortunately, no successor, until the West discovered his merits. After him, the desert closed in once more. Yet if Western historians have been fascinated by what they considered to be his greatness as a precursor, this was so precisely to the degree in which the thinking of this precursor was no longer, properly speaking, Islamic. They found in him what they thought of as being 'philosophy', but which was unfortunately no longer 'philosophy' in the eyes of traditional philosophers; while most of the themes in the programme of the traditional philosophers were not considered by the contemporary West to be philosophy at all. In short, there is total misunderstanding; and thanks to the appreciation bestowed on it in the West, the work of Ibn Khaldun is one of the places *par excellence* where an analysis of the sources and the far-reaching consequences of this misunderstanding is possible.

The consequences are extremely far-reaching. Ibn Khaldun has been credited rather facilely with a certain 'Voltairean irony' before the thing even existed, and an entire youthful *intelligentsia* in the Islamic world goes along with this. He has been hailed as the founder of historical criticism, as the precursor of modern sociology; agnosticism, historicism, positivism and sociologism all appear to have arisen in Islam before there were even the words to define them. The question this raises is the following: what premisses must be present, and what premisses must be absent, for philosophy to renounce both itself and its object and to be reduced to a sociology of philosophy? Our own Latin Middle Ages talked of a philosophy which was *ancilla theologiae.* If it becomes *ancilla sociologiae,* whom does the victory benefit? What was thought to signal the coming of dawn may have been but the fall of twilight. And the fact that the echo of this work was not heard elsewhere in Islam may have been because the shadow of the twilight was not lengthening there. At the very moment when, we are told, Islamic culture was at its last gasp, the metaphysics of Sufism and Shiism were undergoing a tremendous renewal with the work of people such

as al-Simnani, Haydar Amuli, Ibn Abi Jumhur, and so on, who prepared the way for the flowering of the school of Isfahan. We must therefore be aware of the stimulating action of Shiism on philosophical meditation, and of an eschatology in the absence of which there is no historiosophy. We may freely acknowledge a tragic greatness in the case of Ibn Khaldun, but this greatness is not, perhaps, what others have been pleased to think it is.

'Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis in 732/1332, and died in Cairo in 808/1406. The monumental work to which he owes his reputation is the *Prolegomena (Al-Muqaddimah),* translated relatively recently into English. It was written when the author was forty years old; he had compromised himself politically through a whole series of unfortunate experiences, and had established himself and his family in solitude in the fortress of Bani Salama, in the old province of Tiarat in Algeria. He also wrote a universal history, the *Kitab al-'Ibar*, the *Book concerning Events which constitute a Warning or a Lesson;* an autobiography; a treatise entitled *Shifa' al-'sa'il, The Healing of the Seeker*, which is possibly by him and is possibly intended to be about mysticism, but which is certainly not written by a mystic.

The *Prolegomena* take the form of an encyclopaedia of the information needed by the historian if he is to fulfil his task as Ibn Khaldun sees it. In this respect, Ibn Khaldun is quite rightly aware of the fact that he is founding a new and independent science, a science determined by its object, which is the totality of human civilization *(al- 'umran al-bashari* and social facts. It is in six lengthy parts, and deals with human society (ethnology and anthropology), rural civilizations, forms of government and of institutions, societies of urban civilization, economic facts and conditions, science and the humanities—in short, all that goes today by the name of 'cultural phenomena'.

Such an inquiry, it is true, represents something new, something outside the metaphysical search which is the object of traditional philosophy. To see Ibn Khaldun as the precursor of 'modern' positivism is possibly not the best way of judging his work in the context of Islamic culture or, more accurately, of Islamic philosophy. To say that he was aware that the civilization to which he belonged was drawing to a close belongs to the *post eventum* type of prophecy, and it completely loses sight of how Islamic civilization, assuredly in a different form, flourished elsewhere, notably in Iran, of how Islamic philosophy has also

flourished, and of how both Islamic civilization and philosophy continue to endure over the centuries. One credits Ibn Khaldun with having opted for 'reality' while demolishing the edifice of speculative philosophy. Here again, there should be agreement as to what 'reality' is, and what Arabic term one has in mind as defining it. For it is begging the question to begin by reducing 'reality' to the dimensions imposed by agnosticism. The metaphysician is also convinced that he is dealing with 'reality'. But as we said at the beginning, it is important to distinguish carefully between historiosophy and the philosophy of history. The first of these involves the presupposition that the world is penetrated by the divine energies of the supra-sensible worlds. The second can be founded on a causality which completely eliminates the transcendent aspect—it can be a radical secularization of the first, and Ibn Khaldun's work represents just such a secularization. Shiite philosophy, for its part, professed a historiosophy to which historians of philosophy have paid absolutely no attention up till now. On the other hand, the sarcasms of Ibn Khaldun show that he was a total stranger to what the metaphysicians understand and experience as the union of the human intellect with the active Intelligence, which they identify with the Holy Spirit. The phenomenology of the Holy Spirit is replaced by a sociology which, ignoring the transcendent hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, recognizes only a universal reason which is immanent in historical humanity.

From this point of view, Ibn Khaldun has even appeared to some enthusiasts as a precursor of Karl Marx, in that he sees the differences between the generations as reflections of different modes of economic life, these modes being then regarded as explanations of the differences in question. Is it superfluous to recall the antithesis of this, and to ask whether humanity does not actually organize its social, economic and political life in accordance with the initial perception that, prior to all empirical data, is disclosed to it by the sense of its life and destiny? Islamic philosophy and spirituality have both replied to this question and have determined the axis of man's orientation. It is significant that in dealing with a subject as decisive as alchemy, Ibn Khaldun bypasses the real question. He saw nothing in alchemy but 'glass-blowers', at a time when his contemporary al-Jildaki was elaborating a monumental work on alchemy, viewed as being essentially a spiritual science of nature and man.

In short, after Averroes' death, was the true orientation of spirituality in Islam represented by Ibn al-'Arabi or Ibn Khaldun? Is the distant cause of our present deep crisis the fact that the way of Ibn Khaldun was not followed? Or does it, on the contrary, stem from the fact that by fulfilling Ibn Khaldun's programme, modern secularization went hand in hand with the obliteration of what someone like Ibn al-'Arabi represented and continues to represent? In both cases, the question confronting the philosopher is whether the reduction of the 'divine sciences' to 'human sciences' is in accordance with man's destiny. What is at stake is not merely the fate of Islamic philosophy, but the vocation of Islam in this world, and the validity of the witness that Islam has borne in this world for fourteen centuries. The no doubt tragic greatness of Ibn Khaldun's work appears to us to lie in the fact that it leads us to a conscious formulation of these questions.

II. The Metaphysics of Sufism

Sufism not only offers something other than a philosophy but has also expressed a most lively criticism of philosophy, to the extent that it identifies philosophy with a limiting rationalism. In spite of this, Sufism involves a whole system of metaphysics, a fact which proves how little philosophy and metaphysics can be identified with each other. As we said in our general survey, what is meant here by 'Sufi metaphysics' corresponds to what is generally understood as 'speculative mysticism' . As Meister Eckhart could not be left out of a history of German philosophy, no more can Ibn al-'Arabi be excluded from a history of Islamic philosophy. The difference between this metaphysics and the metaphysics of the thinkers who preceded it is, to put it briefly, the distance already indicated between the technical terms *'ilm al-yaqin*, meaning the certainty derived from theoretical knowledge, such as knowledge of the properties of fire, and *haqq al-yaqin*, meaning the certainty which proceeds from apersonally realized truth, being oneself the fire. In the writings of the Sufi metaphysicians we find extremely complex schemas of the universe (for example, the speculations on the Throne, which connect with the speculations of the Jewish Cabbalists), but it is never a question of theoretical knowledge, isolated from the inner spiritual life. Seen from this point of view, metaphysics and mystical anthropology are inseparable, as are the *modi essendi* and the *modi intelligendi*. A speculative mysticism can also be a mysticism of love, just as a mysticism of love can involve a whole metaphysical system.

It is true that the boundary line is made even vaguer by the fact that, as we saw, the *situs* occupied by the *ishraqiyun* in relation to Peripatetic philosophy corresponds to that occupied by the Sufis in relation to **the** *kalam*. An *ishraqi can* be considered a Sufi in the broad sense of **the** word, and he is certainly closer to the Sufis than he will ever be to the *mutakalhmun* or to the rationalist philosophers. Nevertheless, he cannot be considered purely and simply as a Sufi.

This chapter deals with both Sunnis and Shiites, whatever theory one adopts with regard to the origins of Sufism. Sufism is the common element in both Sunnism and Shiism, but there will be no attempt made in these brief pages to write the history of the Sufi brotherhoods *(turuq).* These receive only occasional mention.

Moreover, there are two factors to be considered here, because they force us to realize that Sufism (*tasawwuf)* by itself does not account for all the mystical spirituality of Islam. Firstly, there is the existence of the *ishraqiyun* whom we have just mentioned; they are to be found above all among the Shiites, especially after Mulla Sadra Shirazi. And there is the existence of these same Shiites, whose spirituality {interiorism, esotericism) stems from the teaching of the holy Imams, and who since the Safavid era, for reasons which we cannot go into here, prefer the words *'irfan* and *'urafa' to* the words *tasawwuf* and *sufiya.* In addition, to the degree to which for the Shiite spiritual Shiism as such is already 'the' *tariqah,* without his having to join 'a' *tariqah* or congregation, there exists within Shiism a Sufism which leaves behind it neither material traces nor archival documents.

Finally, we must avoid thinking in terms of watertight compartments. From the thirteenth century down to our day, the doctrine of Ibn al-'Arabi made itself equally felt among the Sufis and among the *ishraqiyun,* among the *hukama"* and the *'urafa'.*

1. **RUZBIHAN** BAQLI AL-SHIRAZI

The importance of this very great mystic, the part he played, his place in the history of Sufism, began to become apparent only after the recent publication of his works. He was born at Pasa, a town in the region of Shiraz, in 522/1128, and he died in Shiraz in 606/1209. He was partly contemporary with Ibn al-'Arabi, and we are indebted to him for the preservation of the only text of a work by al-Hallaj. But it is not enough to situate him between al-Hallaj and Ibn al-'Arabi if we are to define his personality and his doctrine. He differs from the Sufis who preceded him by rejecting any asceticism which opposes divine to human love, for he sees both as two forms of a love which is one and the same. It is a question not of a transfer from a human 'object' to a divine 'object', but of the metamorphosis or transformation of the 'subject'. The book entitled *The Jasmine of Love's Faithful is* on the one hand an account of the prophetic meaning of beauty, and views

the prophet of Islam as the prophet of the religion of beauty, and on the other hand returns with all the resources of Platonic inspiration to the pre-eternal origin of love, dealing with the great themes of the eternal witness and the eternal Betrothed. Hence the representation of the metamorphosis of the subject in the couple Majnun and Layla {the Tristan and Iseult of the mystical epic in both Arabic and Persian). At the height of his love, Majnun becomes the 'mirror of God'. God himself, through the eyes of the lover, contemplates his own eternal face in the beloved.

The source of this doctrine, which demonstrates Ruzbihan's affinity with both Leon Hebreo and the *Fedeli d'amore,* is the metaphysical intuition expressed in one of the inspired *hadith* which have nourished all speculative Sufism: the 'hidden Treasure' aspires to be known, and creates the world in order to be known and to know itself in created beings. The Spirit is the spring-head through which exist the holy Spirits, the pre-eternal, spiritual individualities of beings. Assuredly, every atom of being is an eye that is wholly absorbed in the contemplation of the Light which gave it birth. But then the divine Being experiences jealousy with regard to itself; in revealing or objectifying itself to itself, it is no longer identically its own witness to itself: it has witness outside itself, *another than* itself. This is the first Veil. The divine Being also seeks to take possession of itself again; it diverts this Spirit from contemplating it and sends its creature back to the contemplation of itself. This vision of itself through itself is the second Veil. The test of the Veil is the meaning itself of Creation and of the descent of the holy Spirits into this world. For the mystic, to pass the test consists in discovering self-knowledge to be the gaze with which God contemplates himself. Then the veil becomes a mirror, because from the beginning of Creation God has never contemplated any world *other* than himself—he abhors such a possiblity. But those who become conscious of being the witnesses through whom God bears witness to himself are the eyes through which God looks at the world. This is already close to Ibn al-'Arabi.

At the request of a friend, Ruzbihan, at the age of fifty-five, wrote a journal of his dreams from the time of his youth. This document is possibly unique in the mystical literature of all time. It contains visions of archangels, of celestial forms, of prophets, of rosy dawns and rose gardens: the entire *diarium spirituale is* as it were a series of variations

on the theme of the amphiboly *(iltibas)* of the human Image which simultaneously 'is' and 'is not'. All that is sensible, visible and audible is amphiboly, has a double meaning, in that it reveals what is invisible and inaudible, and it is precisely this that constitutes the theophanic function of the beauty of created beings, without it being inconsistent with the divestment of the pure Essence *{tanzih)*. Ruzbihan's thought does not progress by means of conceptual dialectic but through a dialectic of imagery; his books are difficult to translate, but are of utmost interest for any metaphysics of the imagination. Because of his extreme emotionalism, he was a man of 'inverted paradox', prone to the kind of extravagant utterances *(shathiyat)* favoured by mystics. He made a collection of the chief of such utterances from the Sufi masters, first in Arabic, and later, at the request of his pupils, he made an expanded version of them in Persian. This is a long and difficult work, a Summa of the Sufism of his time.

The Ruzbihanian tradition *(tariqah)* was continued in Shiraz over several generations. His mausoleum has been recently and magnificently restored. Anyone who is steeped in the work of Ruzbihan is able to understand how it is that the *Diwan* by his famous compatriot, the great poet Hafiz (791/1389), is still read today by the Sufis of Iran as a mystical Bible.

2. 'ATTAR OF NISHAPUR

Ruzbihan came from south-western Iran. Farid al-Din 'Attar was from the north-east, from Khurasan. Unfortunately, even though we can agree more or less on the date of his birth at Nishapur (513/1120), there is some difficulty in deciding on the exact date of his death. According to a long-held tradition, the year of his death was 627/1230 or 632/1235, which would make him extraordinarily old. Hellmut Ritter suggested the year 589/1193, which perhaps makes it too short a period. We will not go into the question here.

The late Hellmut Ritter, who devoted his life's work to one who was among Iran's greatest mystical poets, has observed that the work of 'Attar is somewhat unusual for an oriental poet in that it allows us to follow the stages of his inner development. Broadly speaking, there are three stages in 'Attar's inner biography. First there is a period of youth, in the course of which the poet progressively masters the art of the spiritual recital, and for that purpose gathers together a vast

amount of material. Secondly, there is a period during which the technique of the anaphora in all its forms is developed; the poet's art is displayed in works which are almost unparalleled in the literature of the world, as regards both their number and above all their scope. Thirdly, there is the Shiite period of his old age. Unfortunately, we cannot expand here on the highly important theme of 'Attar's conversion to Shiism, nor go into any detail about the authentic works and the works of dubious attribution (he had the same name as another, second 'Attar). It is clear which are the authentic works, because they are mentioned by 'Attar himself in his last work, *Lisan al-ghayb, The Language of Mystery*. They number something over fifteen, and the chief among them are Ilahi-*Namah*, *The Divine Book*, *Mantiq al-tayr*, *The Language of the Birds; Musibat-Namah, The Book of the Ordeal, Asrar-namah, The Book of Secrets; Ushtur-namah, The Book of the Camel*, to mention but a few. After Hakim al-Sana'i, who died in 545/1141, and who may be considered its founder, 'Attar, together with Jami (see below, p. 310) is the most important representative of the mystical Persian epic. We should make it clear that this epic can be a continuous story, and it can also take the form of a mystical rhapsody, whether the theme comes through in the recitals which illustrate it, or whether the stories succeed each other, linked together by an invisible thread which it is up to the reader to discover.

As *The Divine Book* and *The Language of the Birds,* which includes the wonderful mystical episode of the Simurgh, have been translated into French, we will convey some idea of 'Attar's work by a brief analysis of the *Musibat-namah*, which, like all his remaining works, has not as yet been translated into a Western language. Essentially, this is a recount recital of the soul's journey during its mystical meditation in a period of retreat. Forty stations correspond to the forty days of this retreat, and the 'journey in the spirit' is the way whereby man discovers that he is more than a being of flesh and blood, that he contains the universe within himself, or rather that he himself is the universe. The traveller does not rest by night or day. In order to find a remedy for the pain which ravages the exiled heart of the outsider, he goes for help to each of the four archangels of the tetrad in turn: Gabriel, Seraphiel, Michael and Azrael. Then he goes to the Angel who represents those who carry the cosmic Throne (the Sphere of Spheres), then to the Heaven of the fixed Stars, then to the 'protected

Table' {the Soul of the world), to the Calamus (the Intelligence), to paradise, to hell, to heaven, to the Sun and the Moon, to the four Elements, to the mountain where the Ark came to rest; then to the sea, to the minerals, to the plants, the wild animals, the birds, the fish, Satan, the spirits, man, to Adam and the six great prophets down to Muhammad, and lastly to the perception of the senses and the perception of the intellect. Finally, he arrives at the station of the heart and at that of the soul, where he is told: 'You have wandered the entire universe in vain, before coming at last to the shore of my sea. What you have been seeking is within you. You yourself are the obstacle which separates you from it. Plunge into this sea of mine, lose yourself in its depths.' Why has he had to go so far? 'In order that you should learn my value.' A sage explains to him: 'You must understand that your quest is the quest of the divine Lover in search of himself.' The traveller then understands that all the universes are within him; he is finally acquainted with the mystery of his soul. Up till that point he had travelled towards God, but henceforth he will travel 'in' God. The conclusion is not only the same as the final episode of the other mystical epics, but is one with the conclusion of all the mystical metaphysicians (see p.342 below, Mulla Sadra's 'four spiritual journeys').

Apart from his great epics and a vast work on the lives of the mystics *(Tadhkirat al-awliya')*, 'Attar also left an enormous collection of individual poems, a *Diwan* of several thousand distichs in Persian. Some of them have the force of challenges:

> He who has assiduously made himself a frequenter of the 'Temple of the Mages'—Of what denomination will he be? What ritual will he submit to?—I am beyond Good and Evil, beyond unbelief and religion, beyond theory and practice—For beyond all these things there are still many stages.

What is being woven here is a web of active images which originate in the Zoroastrian Mazdeism of ancient Persia, and which reveal a secret affinity with al-Suhrawardi's *ishraq.* The Temple of the Mages, the prior and the priory of the Mages, the sons of the Mages, the wine of the Mages—all these expressions are the symbolic designations of Sufi concepts and practices.

To be sure, the tendency in the West has been to minimize the importance of this vocabulary, because it has been thought *a priori*

that Mazdeism could have had no influence over Iranian Islam. But a totally different idea of things was maintained by the masters of Iranian Sufism. These ghazal by 'Attar, with their Mazdean symbolism, have been the subject of a pertinent commentary by Shaykh Safi al-Din al-Ardabili (735/1334), whom the Iranian dynasty of the Safavids acknowledged as their ancestor. We mention this here because there will be no opportunity to come back to it in this study, nor to speak of the commentaries of another shaykh among the *'urafa'* Iranians, Shaykh Adhari Tusi, who died at Isfara'in in 866/1461 -1462.

3. 'UMAR AL-SUHRAWARDI

Although they both came from the same town of Suhravard, in the region of Zanjan in north-eastern Iran, it is important not to confuse Shihab al-Din 'Umar al-Suhrawardi, the great shaykh who established himself in Baghdad, with Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi (587/1191), the *Shaykh al-Ishraq* and resurrector of the philosophy and theosophy of ancient Persia. Shihab al-Din 'Umar al-Suhrawardi was born in 539/1145, and died in Baghdad in 632/1234-1235. He took his first steps along the road of mysticism under the guidance of his paternal uncle Abu al-Najib al-Suhrawardi (d. 563/1167-1168), and both of them are the initiators of the *suhrawardiya* Sufi *tariqah* which still exists today.

Although he was essentially a great Sufi shaykh, 'Umar al-Suhrawardi is relevant to the history of philosophy for many reasons. He wrote a treatise against Greek philosophy, or more accurately against the 'Hellenizing philosophers', the *falasifa,* which was translated into Persian in 774/1372-1373 by Mu'in al-Din Yazdi. In the absence of any existing study of it, and because it is still difficult to gain access to the manuscripts, we cannot give a description of it here. Nevertheless, we may guess something of its nature from the fact that one of its chapters is about the 'second birth', as well as from the fact that 'Umar al-Suhrawardi's excellent Summa of Sufism, which is entitled *'Awarifal-Ma'arif (The Benefits of Spiritual Knowledge)*, also contains his personal philosophical doctrine—we have only to read chapter fifty-six, on the spirit, the soul and the intellect, to realize this. This Summa has itself been a current Sufi textbook for centuries. Between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries of the Christian era it was translated and commentated in both Persian and Turkish. It has been

read by all Sufis; but unfortunately, although there are plenty of manuscripts of it, there is no real critical edition.

Another aspect of 'Umar al-Suhrawardi's work which is of interest to the philosopher is that represented by his two treatises on the *futuwwah.* This Arabic word, whose Persian equivalent is javan-mardi, means youth or youthfulness. The *fata* or *javanmard* is the young man; but in its technical sense the word signifies the youthfulness of the spirit rather than that of physical age. The *futuwwah* is the particular form which the relationship between esotericism and social reality takes in Islam. As described by the Sufi writers, the phenomenon originated in Sufism and extends into the activities of the crafts: *futuwwah* corresponds both to the Western idea of chivalry and to that of a guild. There will be occasion to speak below of the symbolic story of its origins, in relation to the work of Husayn Kashifi. Here we will simply say that in extending beyond Sufism, the *futuwwah* aspires to confer a sacred quality on all professions, transforming their activities into so many liturgical acts. Admission to the *futuwwah* is by means of a ceremony of initiation, whose ritual consists of three methods of commitment between which the candidate must choose: commitment by word of honour, by acceptance of sword or spear, or by participation in the ritual Cup. The activities of the companions, who are bound to each other by a pact of fraternity, are elevated to the level of chivalric service. Every companion is a *javanmard.*

We may recall that 'Umar al-Suhrawardi was theological adviser to the 'Abbasid caliph Nasir li-Din Allah {575/1180-652/1225). The caliph, a strong sympathiser with Imamite Shiism and even with Ismailism, cherished the great project of making the *futuwwah* the link between the spiritual families from one end of the Islamic world to the other—something in the nature of a pan-Islamic *futuwwah.* He formed what has been called an aristocratic *futuwwah,* a 'court *futuwwah'.* But it is not this aristocratic order of chivalry which alone can justify an identification of the *futuwwah* with a Western chivalric order. In fact, one has only to refer to the spiritual genealogy that the *futuwwah* attributed to itself, and to its ethical rules, in order to understand this. Even though the Mongol invasions unfortunately wrecked the great project of Nasir li-Din Allah, the catastrophe did not entail the disappearance of the *futuwwah* as a spiritual chivalry. The books of the *futuwwah* are spaced over the centuries. Of those

which are written in the tradition of 'Umar al-Suhrawardi, we will mention the *Futuwwah-Namah* by Najm al-Din Zarkub al-Tabrizi (712/1313), who was himself a member of the *Suhrawardiya* order. It is true that all these treatises bear the stamp of Sufism, but this is because the *futuwwah* marks the introduction of the idea of spiritual chivalry into Sufism. {A similar phenomenon occurred in the West in the fourteenth century, in the Rhineland school of mysticism.) At the same time, the *futuwwah* is aware of being a branch of Sufism by virtue of its origins. On this account it was able to penetrate different trades and professions, putting forward in each case an appropriate form of *futuwwah.* It was truly one of the summits of the spiritual ideal envisaged by Islamic society.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the idea of the *futuwwah* appears inseparable from the Shiite idea of the *walayah.* It must be understood that this word indicates the pact of divine friendship (*dusti* in Persian), the pact of the 'Friends of God' *(Dustan-i Haqq),* which bases the relationship between God and man on the model of chivalric service. Unfortunately, if one persists in the habit of translating *walayah* as 'holiness', everything changes. The *walayah is* transmitted, through the divine initiative, to the 'Friends of God'. What a 'transmissible' holiness would consist of is not easy to perceive.

The influence of 'Umar al-Suhrawardi on Sufism as a whole was considerable. We can only draw attention here to two names: firstly, that of the shaykh's son, Muhammad ibn 'Umar (the fourth Suhrawardi!), who wrote a little manual of Sufism entitled *Zad al-musafir (The Traveller's Viaticum),* and, secondly, that of an Iranian Sufi, 'Izz al-Din Mahmud al-Kashani (735/1334-1335), who wrote an important work in Persian with the title *Misbah al-hidayat(The Torch of Spiritual Orientation).*

4. IBN AL-'ARABI AND HIS SCHOOL

Some of the figures of whom we have been speaking were contemporary with **Ibn** al-'Arabi; the dates of their death put them chronologically before him. We now come to the shore of an endless sea, to the foot of a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds: all these metaphors are appropriate to the gigantic scope of the work of Ibn al-'Arabi, one of the greatest visionary theosophers of all time. We must radically alter the false perspective, which stems from some unadmitted pre-

judice, according to which Ibn al-'Arabi's work signals the end of the golden age of Sufism. Far from this being the case, we may say that this work marks the beginning of something novel and original—so original that it could have occurred only at the heart of Abrahamic esotericism, and, of the three branches of this esotericism, only at the heart of the Islamic. The philosophy of the *falasifa,* the *kalam* of the scholastics, the asceticism of primitive pious Sufism—all these are swept away in a torrent of unprecedented speculative metaphysics and visionary power. This is the beginning of the 'golden age' of mystical theosophy. As is well known, Ibn al-'Arabi's theosophy and the 'Oriental' *(ishraq)* theosophy of al-Suhrawardi are related to each other. When both united with the Shiite theosophy deriving from the holy Imams, the result was the great flowering of Shiite metaphysics in Iran (with Haydar Amuli, Ibn Abi Jumhur, Mulla Sadra etc.) whose potential even today is far from being exhausted.

Ibn al-'Arabi was born in south-eastern Spain, in Murcia, on the 17th Ramadan 569/28th July 1165. His formative years and the years of his apprenticeship were spent in Andalusia. At the age of seventeen, Ibn al-'Arabi had an extraordinary conversation with the philosopher Averroes. There was no further encounter between them until the day when the ashes of Averroes were transported to Cordoba. The young Ibn al-'Arabi was present at this occasion, and he composed some poignant distichs which presage the orientation that he was to give to Islamic philosophy and spirituality. He was strongly influenced in his formative years by Ibn Masarrah's school of Almeria, which propagated the teaching of Ismaili and Shiite missionaries. Later, when Mulla Sadra's school of Isfahan accepted the doctrines of Ibn al-'Arabi, the grandiose circuit of this return to the origins was completed. In the meantime, to remain in Andalusia was intolerable for anyone who wished to reject literalism. Ibn al-'Arabi decided to leave for the East, and undertook a voyage that for him possessed the value of a symbol. After an admirably full life and a prolific literary output, he died peacefully at Damascus, surrounded by his family, on the 28th Rabi' II 638/16th November 1240. He is buried there with his two sons on the side of Mount Qasiyun, and his tomb is still for many a place of pilgrimage.

It is impossible to summarize the doctrines of Ibn al-'Arabi in a few lines. All we can do is to indicate very briefly some of the essential

points. As in all gnosis, the keystone of the system, if the term is acceptable, is the mystery of a pure Essence which is unknowable, unpredictable, and ineffable. From this unfathomable Abyss the torrent of theophanies arises and proliferates, and the theory of the divine Names is born. Ibn al-'Arabi is in complete agreement about this with Ismaili and Twelver Shiite theosophy, both of which rigorously respect the rule and consequences of apophatic *{tanzih)* theology. Is there a breach between them in so far as Ibn al-'Arabi gives the name of Pure Light to this Ineffable Being, or identifies it with absolute Being, whereas Ismaili theosophy sees the source of being as strictly beyond being—as supra-being? Both interpretations result in a sense of the transcendent unity of being *(wahdat al-wujud),* which has been so widely misunderstood.

The divine abyss conceals the mystery of the 'hidden Treasure' that aspires to be known, and that creates creatures in order to become in them the object of its own knowledge. This revelation of the divine Being is accomplished in the form of a succession of theophanies characterized by three stages: the epiphany of the divine Essence to itself, which can only be spoken of by allusion; a second theophany which is the sum total of all the theophanies in and through which the divine Essence reveals itself to itself in the forms of the divine Names—that is to say, in the forms of beings such as they exist in the secret of the absolute mystery; and a third theophany in the forms of concrete individuals, which bestows upon the divine Names a concrete and manifest existence. These Names exist from all eternity within the divine Essence, and are this very Essence, because the Attributes which they designate, although they are not identical with the divine Essence as such, are nevertheless not different from it. These Names are known as 'Lords' *(arbab)* who possess the appearance of so many hypostases. {We may recall the procession of the divine Names in the Hebrew Book of Enoch, or 'Third Enoch'.)

In terms of actual experience, we can know these divine Names only through our knowledge of ourselves: God describes himself to us through us. In other words, the divine Names are essentially relative to the beings which name them, as these beings find and experience them in and through their own mode of being. This is why these Names **are** also designated as constitutive of the levels or planes of being *(hadarat,* nazarat, meaning presences or, as Ramon Llull translated

it, 'dignities'). Seven of them are the Imams of the Names, and the others are known as the 'guardians of the temple' or templars {*sadanah)*: the theory of the divine Names is modelled on the general theory of the *hadarat.* Thus the divine Names possess meaning and full reality only through and for the beings who are their epiphanic forms *(mazahir).* Equally, these forms which support the divine Names have existed in the divine Essence from all eternity; they are our own latent existences in their archetypal state,' eternal haecceities' *(a 'yan thabita).* It is these latent individualities which aspire from all eternity to be revealed: their yearning is that of the 'concealed Treasure' aspiring to be known. From this there eternally proceeds the 'Sigh of compassion' *(al-Nafas al-Rahmani)* which brings into active being the divine Names that are still unknown, and the existences through and for which these divine Names are made manifest in actuality. Thus in its hidden being, each existence is a breath of the divine existential Compassion, and the divine name *al-Lah* is the equivalent of the name *al-Rahman*, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

This 'Sigh of compassion' is the origin of amass whose composition is wholly subtle, and which is known by the name of Cloud (*'ama):* a primordial Cloud which both receives all forms and bestows upon beings their forms, is both active and passive, constructive and receptive. Primordial Cloud, existential Compassion, active, absolute or theophanic Imagination—these words designate the same original reality, who is the created God *(Haqq makhluq)* by whom all creatures are created. He is the Creator-created, the Hidden-manifested, the Esoteric-exoteric, the First-last, and so on. It is through this Figure that esoteric theosophy in Islam can be situated on the level of the 'speculative theology' which we mentioned above in our general survey. The First-created *(Makhluq awwal, Protoktistos)* in the bosom of this primordial Cloud is the Muhammadan Logos, the metaphysical reality of the prophet *(Haqiqah muhammadiyah,* also called the Muhammadan Holy Spirit *(Ruh muhammadi),* the source and origin of a theology of the Logos and of the Spirit which reproduces, in the form appropriate to it, the theology of the neo-Platonists, of gnosis, of Philo and of Origen.

The pair Creator-created *(haqq-Khalq)* is repeated at all levels of theophany and at all stages of the 'descent of being'. This is neither monism nor pantheism; rather, it can be called theomonism and

panentheism. Theomonism is no more than the philosophical expression of the interdependence of Creator and created—interdependence, that is, on the level of theophany. This is the secret of the personal divinity *(sirr al-rububiya),* of the interdependence, that is, between the lord *(rabb)* and him who chooses him as his lord *(marbub),* to the extent that one cannot subsist without the other. The diety *(uluhiya)* is on the level of pure Essence; the *rububiya* is the divinity of the personal lord to whom one has recourse, because one answers for him in this world. *Al-Lah* is the Name designating the divine Essence which is qualified by all its attributes, while the *rabb* or lord is the divine Being personified and particularized by one of his Names and Attributes. This is the whole secret of the divine Names and of what Ibn al-'Arabi calls 'the God created in beliefs', or rather the God who creates himself in these beliefs. This is why knowledge of God is limitless for the gnostic, since the recurrence of Creation and the metamorphoses of the theophanies are the law itself of being.

In this brief summary we can only suggest, not systematize. Ibn al-'Arabi was an enormously prolific writer. As we know thanks to the exemplary labours of Osman Yahya, his works in all number eight hundred and fifty-six, of which five hundred and fifty have come down to us in the form of two thousand one hundred and seventeen manuscripts. His most famous masterpiece is the vast work of some three thousand large quarto pages entitled *The Book of the Spiritual Conquests of Mecca (Kitab al-futuha tal-Makkiya),* which is at present being edited for the first time by Osman Yahya. This work has been read throughout the centuries by all the philosophers and spiritual men of Islam. The same can be said of the collection entitled *The Gems of the Wisdom of the Prophets (Fusus al-hikam),* which is not so much a history of the prophets as a speculative meditation on twenty-seven of them, regarded as the archetypes of the divine Revelation. The work itself pertains to the 'phenomenon of the revealed Book', for Ibn al-'Arabi presents it as having been inspired from Heaven by the Prophet. Both Shiite and Sunni authors have written commentaries on it. Osman Yahya has compiled an inventory of one hundred and fifty of them, about a hundred and thirty of which are the work of Iranian spiritual men. These commentaries are not simply innocuous glosses, for although the work of Ibn al-'Arabi aroused fervent admiration among his followers, it also provoked passionate wrath and

anathema among his adversaries.

Among other famous commentaries on the *Fusus*, there is one by Da'ud al-Qaysari (751/1350-1351), a Sunni, and one by Kamal al-Din 'Abd al-Razzaq {died between 735/1334 and 751/1350-1351), a famous Shiite thinker, to whom we also owe a mystical commentary on the Quran, a treatise on the vocabulary of Sufism and a treatise on the *futuwwah*. Mention should also be made of the lengthy Shiite commentary by Haydar Amuli, which is in the process of being edited, and which includes a severe criticism of Da'ud al-Qaysari on a point which is decisive for all the philosophy of the *walayah*.

Two questions arise: how is one to conceive of an integral history of Islamic philosophy before all these texts have been studied? And how long will it be before they have been studied?

There can be no question here of even a brief outline of the history of Ibn al-'Arabi's school. But we must not omit to mention the name of Sadr al-Din al-Qunyawi (meaning from Quniyah or Konia or Iconium, often mistakenly transcribed as *Qunawi)*. Sadr al-Din (671/1272 or 673/1273-1274) was both the disciple and the son-in-law of Ibn al-'Arabi, and his thought was steeped in Ibn al-'Arabi's doctrine. He wrote a number of important works. He is of great interest in that he himself in some sense represents a crossroads: he was in touch with Jalal al-Din Rumi and Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah (or Hamu'i), and corresponded with the great Shiite philosopher Nasir al-Din Tusi, as well as with other shaykhs. None of the texts necessary for an analysis of his thought has yet been edited.

5. NAJM AL-DIN AL-KUBRA AND HIS SCHOOL

We noted above how Ibn al-'Arabi attributed a symbolic value to his geographical migration to the East. At the same period, before the Mongol invasion of Chingiz Khan, there took place a movement which was the symmetrical inverse of Ibn al-'Arabi's: the current of Sufism flowed from central Asia into Iran, Anatolia and Mesopotamia. This central Asian Sufism was dominated at that time by the great figure of Najm al-Din al-Kubra, and the encounter of his followers with the followers of Ibn al-'Arabi is of capital and decisive importance for the spiritual future of Oriental Islam. The geometrical location of this encounter could be defined symbolically as al-Suhrawardi's 'Oriental' theosophy of Light, for the doctrine of Najm al-Din al-Kubra

is also an experiential mysticism of Light. One could say that if the proximate cause of the Renaissance in the West during the sixteenth century was the influx of Byzantine scholars to Italy in the face of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople, a comparable phenomenon took place in the East some two and a half centuries earlier. This is why Islamic philosophy cannot be divided into periods in the same way as Western philosophy. Nevertheless, even if it is accurate to speak of the Safavid Renaissance in Iran, it is altogether wrong to speak of a 'Mongol Renaissance'. What must be taken into consideration is the contacts that took place between teachers and schools of thought—contacts whose results would compensate for all the calamities of the times.

Najm al-Din al-Kubra was born in 540/1146, and spent the first part of his life in long journeys to Nishapur, Hamadhan, Isfahan, Mecca and Alexandria. He returned to Khwarizm in 580/1184. His activities were thus centred on central Asia, where he had a vast following, even though he admitted only twelve disciples into his immediate and intimate circle. At the time of the siege of Khwarizm, Chingiz Khan had sent him a message, inviting him to take refuge with him. But Najm al-Din al-Kubra refused to abandon the people with whom he had lived for so many years, and according to the account given by Rashid al-Din Fadl-Allah (see above, p. 266), he died a hero's death in 618/1221, defending the town against the Mongols.

What distinguishes the Sufism of central Asia is the fact that Najm al-Din al-Kubra was the first Sufi master to turn his attention to the visionary phenomena of colour, the coloured photisms that the mystic perceives while he is in a spiritual state. He set himself the task of describing these photisms, and of analysing the degrees of colour as indicative of the state of the mystic and of the stage he had reached in his spiritual development. Needless to say, it is not a question of physical perceptions on the part of the external senses. Najm-al-Din al-Kubra refers over and over again to these coloured lights as something seen 'by closing one's eyes', a phenomenon which pertains to the perception of an 'aura'. We can see immediately that these meditations are part of a metaphysics of Light which links up with that of al-Suhrawardi's *ishraq*, and which like the latter postulates an ontology of the *mundus imaginalis*.

Affinity and correspondence do, of course, exist between physical

colours and 'aural' colours, in the sense that physical colours themselves possess a moral and spiritual quality which 'symbolizes with' the quality expressed by the *aura.* This correspondence gives a spiritual master a means of control whereby he is able to discriminate between these supra-sensible perceptions and what we would nowadays call 'hallucinations'. Technically, we should speak of a 'visionary apperception'. The phenomenon which corresponds to it is initial and primary, irreducible to anything else. The organ of this perception, and the mode of being which makes it possible, result from what Najm al-Din al-Kubra calls a philosophy of 'the subtle senses of the supra-sensible world'. 'Learn, oh my friend, that the object of the search is God, and the seeking subject is a light which comes from him'. The seeker is none other than the captive light itself, the 'man of light'. An effulgence from Heaven descends to meet the flame that springs from the aura of terrestrial man, and in this blaze of light Najm al-Din al-Kubra discerns or senses the presence of the 'celestial witness', of the 'supra-sensible personal guide'. The work of Najm al-din al-Kubra—his theory of photisms, his metaphysics of light and his physiology of the subtle organs—was admirably completed by 'Ala'al-Dawlah al-Simnani (see below).

Of the immediate followers of Najm al-Din al-Kubra, mention must be made—though all too briefly—of the father of Jalal al-Din Rumi, Baha' al-Din Walad (628/1230-1231), and of Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah (or Hamu'i) (650/1252-1253), whose works, which are still unedited, are as gripping as they are difficult to read. Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah was a practitioner of arithmosophy (the science of the philosophical alphabet), and of symbolic diagrams, and, as a fervent Shiite, he was linked by personal devotion to the Twelfth Imam, the Imam who is at present hidden.

Najm al-Din Dayah al-Razi (654/1256) was also a direct disciple of Najm al-Din al-Kubra. On the orders of his shaykh, he fled to the West before the invasion of Chingiz Khan. At Qunya he was in touch with Sadr al-Din al-Qunyawi and Jalal al-Din Rumi. In one of the books that he wrote in Persian, and which is still currently read in Iran, the *Mirsad al- 'ibad* or *Highway of the Men of God,* he makes his own contribution to the theory of coloured photisms. We are also indebted to him for a mystical commentary on the Quran, which he was not able to complete beyond Surah 53 (the Star). Al-Simnani completed

it in a highly personal fashion, in a work which is one of the masterpieces of esotericism, that is to say of the radical interiorization of the literal narrative of the Quran.

'Aziz al-Din al-Nasafi *{ca.* 700/1300-1301) was a pupil of Sa'd al-Din Hamuyah. Several of his works in Persian have been edited: *Kashf al-haqa'iq, The Unveiling of Metaphysical Realities; Maqsad-i aqsa, The Supreme Aim;* the collection of treatises entitled *al-Insan al-Kamil, The Perfect Man.* His theosophy contains a cyclical theory of the epochs of the world which accords with that of Ismaili gnosis—a fact which explains why the Ismailis of central Asia considered him one of themselves. His theomonism accords with that of Ibn al-'Arabi. In his work we encounter the idea of a divine triad expressed by the names Allah, al-Rahman al-Rahun (God, the Compassionate, the Merciful), an idea which was taken up by Haydar Amuli in a more obviously neo-Platonic guise. Finally, the idea of the ascent of knowledge from the mineral level to the level of human awareness presages one of Mulla Sadra Shirazi's most characteristic intuitions.

6. AL-SIMNANI

In the tradition of the *Kubrawiyah,* the Order initiated by Najm al-Din al-Kubra, 'Ala' al-Dawlah al-Simnani (736/1336) occupies a distinguished position. The brevity of the following lines may be compensated for in the study that I have elsewhere devoted to him. He was born in 659/1261, and at the age of fifteen he entered service as a page to Arghun, the Mongol sovereign of Iran. At the age of twenty-four, while camping with the army of Arghun before Qazvin, he underwent a profound spiritual crisis. He asked to be released from his post, and devoted the rest of his life to Sufism. He lived mainly at Simnan, two hundred kilometres east of Tehran, where his mausoleum is still a place of pilgrimage. His work is considerable, both in Arabic and in Persian, and none of it has yet been edited. He developed, in depth and in detail, the 'physiology of the man of light' which Najm al-Din al-Kubra had inaugurated, and he integrated this to the schema of a grandiose cosmogony and cosmology which appear in great part to have proceeded from his personal intuition.

The high point of his work is possibly the Quranic commentary which completed the work of Najm al-Din Dayah al-Razi, whose death had prevented him from finishing it. This is a monument of the spiritual

hermeneutic of the Quran, a masterpiece of radical interiority, to which we can compare only a small number of mystical works in Christian and Jewish gnosis. Just as Schiller was to speak of 'the stars of your destiny' which are within you, al-Simnani spoke of the 'prophets of your being', thereby relating each element which emanates from one of the prophets of the Biblical and Quranic tradition to one of the centres of the subtle physiology typified respectively by one of these prophets. The elements of prophetology must be read and understood on these levels of 'inner history'. Each of the seven subtle centres is defined or augured by a coloured light or *aura* (in order of ascent from Adam to Muhammad, these are smoky grey, blue, red, white, yellow, black light and emerald green). The cosmogony which informs the subtle organs of this mystical anthropology deploys and entire system of metaphysical principles, stemming from the three primordial points of Essence (being), Unitude (life), and Unity (light). There are the protosubstances (the Throne or Soul of the world, the *Materia prima* or *Forma prima),* and there are the first Realities (the Inkwell of light or Muhammadan Holy Spirit, the Ink of Light or Muhammadan Light, the Calamus, the Intelligence, etc.). Each of these principles with their symbolic designations, graded proportionately, enters into the genesis of the subtle organs. Furthermore, scattered throughout al-Simnani's work are valuable autobiographical data, the elements of an extraordinary *diarium spirituale.*

7. 'ALIAL-HAMADHANI

Sayyid 'Ali al-Hamadhani (786/1385) was also one of the great figures of the *Kubrawiyah* tradition. As his title of *Sayyid* indicates, he was descended from the family of the Prophet through the Fifth Imam 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, and as his name indicates, he was a native of Hamadhan, the ancient Ecbatana, where he was born in 714/1314. He became a Sufi at the age of twelve, and thereafter spent his life in long journeys. In his late years, in 1380, he went to Kashmir, during the reign of Qutb al-Din Hindul, the fourth sovereign of the first Islamic dynasty, which lasted until 1561. He remained there for six years, disseminating Shiite Sufism, and died on his way back to Persia, at Pakli on the Indo-Afghan border. His son, Mir Mahmud al-Hamadhani, stayed in Kashmir for twelve years and consolidated his father's spiritual labours. The works and opuscules of 'Ali al-Hamadhani are

many in number and almost all are still unedited.

The following brief observations will serve to suggest the form taken by his thought; they are taken from the metaphysical premisses of an oneirocritical treatise which has come to our attention thanks to Fritz Meier, who has made a study of it. In it, 'Ali al-Hamadhani speaks of three forms of the manifestation of being: an absolute form, a negative form, and a relative form. The first of these is not perceptible to men, and is identified, by an implicit allusion to the Quranic verses of the Light (24:3 5) and in accordance with Mazdean cosmology, with the very essence of Light. The second form is also not perceptible to men, because in this form being attains its anti-pole, the point at which it disappears. This state of the non-presence of being, of non-being, is identified with absolute Darkness. Between the two is day, the clarity in which Light and Darkness mingle and their respective degrees of intensity diminish, with a result that is visible to man. This third form in the triad of the manifestation of being is relative being and is the visible form of God. Given this promising start, the philosopher may expect great things from the works of Sayyid 'Ali al-Hamadhani when they are finally edited.

After 'Ali al-Hamadhani, Najm al-Din al-Kubra's Order of *Kubrawiyah* divided into two branches (see p. 316 on the *Dhahabis).*

8. JALAL AL-DIN RUMI AND THE MAWLAWIS

The name of Jalal al-Din Rumi is universally renowned, and he has long been known in the West as one of the greatest Sufi poets to write in the Persian language. What is his place in the history of metaphysics?—this is the question that we shall attempt to answer here. Jalal al-Din Rumi, commonly known in the East as *Mawlana* or *Mawlawi,* meaning our teacher, our friend and guide, was born in central Asia, in Balkh, on the 6th Rabi' 1604/30th September 1207. We saw above that his father, Baha' al-Din Muhammad Walad, had been one of the followers of Najm al-Din al-Kubra. According to a long-established tradition, Baha' al-Din had a laboured theological argument with Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (who, as we know, entered into such discussions more or less wherever he went), and on the orders of the sovereign of Khwarizm, Muhammad ibn Takas, who was al-Razi's protector, Baha' al-Din had to leave Balkh in 609/1212. The trouble with **this tradition is that Fakhr** al-Razi **may** never have been

to Balkh, and that he died in 606/1209. It is also likely that the sovereign of Khwarizm, confronted with the Mongol threat, had other things on his mind than the arguments between theologians and Sufis.

Balkh was taken by the Mongols in 617/1220. The emigration of Baha' al-Din and his family to the West must have taken place a short time before, and was part of the general exodus prompted by the Mongol invasion, which we mentioned above in connection with the Sufis of central Asia. However that may be, the migrant family stayed in Baghdad, Damascus and Mecca before settling at Quniyah in Anatolia. Our sources are not in agreement as to the date. According to a hallowed tradition, it was in the course of this journey that the encounter took place with Farid al-Din 'Attar at Nishapur, and the latter predicted that Jalal al-Din, then a little boy, had a great future before him. (If we admit the truth of this encounter, we must attribute extreme and somewhat dubious longevity to 'Attar, as we said above). Another tradition has it that at Damascus, Ibn al-'Arabi initiated the young Jalal al-Din into Sufism. Historically dubious as these episodes may be, they nevertheless reveal a profound symbolic truth, and they possess the virtue of suggesting the links of spiritual genealogy which in the eyes of the Sufis bound to three great masters together. At Quniyah, Jalal al-Din must also have been on terms of friendship with Sadr al-Din al-Qunyawi, the follower and son-in-law of Ibn al-'Arabi. *Eo ipso* Sadr al-Din was the spiritual link between Ibn al- 'Arabi and Jalal al-Din Rumi. On the death of his father in 628/1230-1231, Jalal al-Din succeeded him in Quniyah as preacher and *mufti* until his own death on the 5th Jumada II 672/17th December 1273.

Meanwhile, the great events which orientated his spiritual biography took place. A year after the death of Baha' al-Din, Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq, one of his former disciples, came to Quniyah. He explained to Jalal al-Din that his father had been not only a preacher and a jurist, a master of the exoteric religious sciences, but also a profound mystic. In this way, Jalal al-Din was initiated into the mystical doctrine of his own father by one of that father's disciples. A monument of this doctrine remains in existence, a collection in Persian of sermons or instructions *(Ma'arif)* in three books, which take as their text mainly a verse from the Quran or a *hadith,* and which were collected and transcribed by their hearers. These sermons expound a mystical doctrine as original as it is attractive; they develop all the aspects of inner contemplation

in a key which is somewhat that of an aesthetic quietism. It would be a pressing but extremely complex task to make a detailed comparison of the teaching contained in the father's Ma'arif with that contained in the son's immense *Mathnawi.*

In 642/1244-1245, the mysterious figure known by the name of Shams-i Tabriz arrived at Quniyah. This young and handsome dervish became the 'witness of contemplation' and thereafter occupied every moment of Jalal al-Din's time. The latter not only dedicated to him his great *Diwan* or collection of mystical poems, but he even published it using Shams' own name—meaning sun—as his *nom de plume.* Then Shams-i Tabriz disappeared, no doubt wearied by the attacks, inspired by jealousy, which were made against him. But through his invisible presence, he became Jalal al-Din's master and inner guide, the *Shaykh al-ghayb* of Najm al-Din al-Kubra and his followers, who is for the Sufi what the invisible Imam is to the Shiites: he who is present to their hearts. Sultan Walad, Jalal al-Din's son, has described this presence in some most lovely verses. However, Shams had two visible successors: first, Salah al-Din Zarkub, and after his death Husam al-Din Hasan, who inspired the *Mathnawi-i Mawlawi.*

This vast mystical rhapsody in Persian, which the Sufis like to call the Persian *Quran (Quran-i farsi),* cannot be summarized in a few lines. The famous prologue sounds the fundamental note: the complaint of the reed {the flute) which has been torn out of its native earth and aspires to return to its dwelling place. Then the rhapsody continues with a long succession of symbolic stories, which make up the mystical epic of the soul—in all, six books which total more than twenty-six thousand distichs or double verses. It is customary to oppose this doctrine of pure mystical love to the mental approach of the philosophers, and the *Mathnawi* does contain more than one scathing attack against the philosophers. But which philosophers?

The *Mathnawi* reproaches the philosophers for their enslavement to dialectic and logic, for their inability to perceive spiritual realities. They lack the sense of the supra-sensible which would allow them to understand that which is expressed by Earth, Fire and Water; as we should say today, they are 'technocrats'. They need tools and require evidence; they possess no doctrine of the active Imagination, and they regard everything that derives from it as chimerical fantasies. That is why those who yearn for Paradise, and who possess the vocation

for it, escape the damaging effects of philosophy and philosophers.

Mulla Sadra was in fact to declare that the esotericist feels a great deal closer to the naive believer than to the rationalist theologian. Likewise, all the accusations that Jalal al-Din levels against the philosophers had already been formulated, more or less, by al-Suhrawardi, the *shaykh al-ishraq.* Does he not make Aristotle say, during their dream-conversation at Jabarsa, that the Sufis are 'philosophers in the true sense'? There is a difference, no doubt, in that al-Suhrawardi intends that his disciple should pass through all the teaching of the Peripatetics as a sort of test, and in order not to lose himself later, once he has set out along the mystical way. It is, therefore, important to distinguish between philosophy and metaphysics. There can be an agnostic philosophy, but there cannot be an agnostic metaphysics. Sufism is not a philosophy, but there is a Sufi metaphysic. Similarly, the *ishraqiyun* philosophers were never bothered by the anti-philosophism of the *Mathnawi,* any more than they opposed Ibn al-'Arabi or Jalal al-Din Rumi, in spite of the differences between them. Even in the nineteenth century, Mulla Hadi Sabzavari, a profoundly *ishraqi* theosopher, wrote a massive commentary on the *Mathnawi* which is worthy to stand beside many of the commentaries written by Sufis. Finally, for everything that nowadays goes by the name of phenomenology of symbolic forms, metaphysics of the imagination, and so on, the *Mathnawi is* an inexhaustible source of material, especially as it is now easily accessible even to the non-Iranologist—thanks to the complete English translation of it by R.A. Nicholson.

Jalal al-Din Rumi also left works in prose {letters, sermons, the collection of *Logia* entitled *Fi-hi ma fi-hi,* meaning 'containing that which it contains'). Husam al-Din was Mawlana's successor until he died in 684/1285-1286. Then Jalal al-Din's son, Sultan Walad (d. 712/1312-1313), who had refused the immediate succession, became the shaykh of the Order of the *Mawlawis.* He was systematically active in organization and propaganda, and composed a triple *Mathnawi and* a collection of *Ma'arif* like that of his grandfather. He marks the beginning of the long history of the Order of *Mawlawis,* both within Turkey and outside it.

9. MAHMUD AL-SHABISTARI AND SHAMS AL-DIN AL-LAHIJI

Mahmud al-Shabistari, one of the great Sufi shaykhs of Azerbaijan, is a major figure in the history of Iranian spirituality. He was born

in 687/1288 in Shabistar near Tabriz, and he lived mainly in this town, the capital of Azerbaijan, at a time when Tabriz, under its Mongol sovereigns, was a meeting-place for many scholars and eminent people. He was a great traveller, and was in contact or correspondence with a large number of spiritual men. He died at Tabriz while still young, at the age of thirty-three, in 720/1320-1321.

He wrote several treatises on Sufism in both verse and prose, but he is known principally for his *Mathnawi,* which is entitled *The Rosary of Mystery (Gulshan-i Raz).* In it, he replies to seventeen questions, put to him by Mir Husayni Sadat al-Harawi, relating to mystical theosophy *('irfan)* and the spiritual way *(suluk).* This poem of barely a thousand distichs touches on all great themes of Sufi metaphysics: the mystical quest and its object, the Perfect Man, the symbols of the midday hour, of Sinai, of Simurgh and the mountain of Qaf, the *A'raf* and the inter-world, the cosmic Quran, the seven Imams of the divine Names, the journey into oneself, and so on. The poem has been read, re-read and meditated by generation after generation, and has been a sort of *vade-mecum* for the Iranian Sufis. But it was in fact written in a deliberately obscure language (like the Provencal *trobar clus),* and the references it contains are practically indecipherable without the aid of commentaries. There are about twenty of these in existence, and they are a credit to the Imamite Shiites as well as to the Ismailis.

Of outstanding importance among these commentaries is the one by Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Jilani al-Lahiji, which is a veritable Summa of Sufi metaphysics. We mentioned above that after 'Ah" al-Hamadhani, the *Kubrawiya* Order divided into two branches. *The Rosary of Mystery* also had commentators who belonged to the *Dhahabiya* branch. Shams al-Din belonged to the *Nurbakhshiya* branch. As his name suggests, he was a native of Lahijan, a small town in Jilan, a province bordering on the Caspian Sea in the south-west. He was a follower of the famous Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh (869/1464-1465, whose name means 'giver of light'). On the latter's death, Shams al-Din was his most famous successor. He settled in Shiraz, where he lived in the *Khanaqah Nuriyah* (another epithet for light, attributed in this case to the Sufi lodge). He died there in 912/1506-1507. The philosopher, mathematician and astronomer Maybudi Qadi Mir Husayn (died between 904/1498 and 911/1505) calls him the friend of the four high metaphysical dwellings *(nasut,*

lahut, malakut, jabarut). He was praised in similar terms by other philosophers such as Sadr al-Din Dashtaki and Jalal Dawwani (see p. 329). His commentary on *The Rosary of Mystery is* a massive and concentrated work in Persian, possessing, as we have said, all the qualities of a Summa. Its title is *The Keys of the Miraculous Cure, a commentary on the Rosary of Mystery (Mafatih al- 'ijaz ft sharh-i Gulshan -iRaz).* The writer also left a treatise on geomancy and a *diwan* of mystical poems, which contains about five thousand distichs.

Shams al-Lahiji always dressed in black. When Shah Isma'il asked him the reason, the answer he gave, invoking the drama of Karbala' and the mourning in the hearts of Shiites which would last until the end of time, exhibits a sense of the symbolism of colours which belongs to the tradition of the metaphysics of photisms professed by the school of Najm al-Din al-Kubra. The theme of 'black light' *(nur-isiyah)* figures very largely in his commentary, with consequences which are far-reaching. As Najm al-Din Day ah al-Razi had already observed, the *coincidentia oppositorum* posited here contains the implication, like an echo of Zoroastrian Mazdeism, that light and Darkness are established *ab initio* and simultaneously, not that Darkness is the result of a creation which is mediate and derivative. Hence the classic problem of the metaphysics of being, which gives precedence of origin sometimes to essence and sometimes to existence, is left behind. Hence, too, the metaphysics of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i was to posit the simultaneity *ab initio* of existence and quiddity, which drew such vigorous opposition from Mulla Hadi Sabzavari. Here again the metaphysics of Sufism are found at the heart of the great problems.

10. 'ABD AL-KARIM AL-JILI

Very little is known at present about the biography of this important mystical theosopher. The name of 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili or al-Jilani locates his family's origin in the Iranian province of Jilan, as was the case with Shams al-Din al-Lahiji before him. It also indicates that he was descended from 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jili or Mani (d. 560/1164-1165 or 562/1166-1167), founder of the Sufi Order of the *Qadiriya.* 'Abd al-Karim speaks of him as 'our shaykh', which would seem to imply that he belonged to the Order. He himself tells us that he lived in Yemen with his immediate shaykh, Sharaf al-Din Isma'il al-Jabarti, and that he travelled to India. He appears to have died in 805/1403. He left

about twenty works which are still unedited, although they are in the process of being edited and studied, and there must have been a large number of others which are lost. One of his great works, *al-Namus al-a'zam,* must have contained forty treatises, of which only about ten seem to have survived (unless he did not complete it). But the work to which he has hitherto owed his reputation is entitled *The Perfect Man (Kitab al-Insan al-Kamil,* mediocre edition of which came out in Cairo about eighty years ago, in 1304 A.H.).

The Perfect Man *(anthropos teleios)* reflects like a mirror not only the powers of nature but the divine powers as well. This mirror *[speculum)* is the place of 'speculative' theosophy. In this connection, and with just cause, allusion has been made to the *anthropos genikos,* Philo's generic man (celestial man as *summum genus,* terrestrial man as *summa species).* Al-Jili professes Ibn al-'Arabi's theomonism *(wahdat al-wujud).* The unique Essence to which the Names and Attributes apply has two aspects: pure Being which is divine Being *(Haqq),* and the being linked with non-being which is the world of creatural beings *(khalq).* The pure Essence clothes itself with attributes only during its theophanies. Seen in this light, Essence and Attributes are differentiated; but in the end the two are one, like water and ice. The world of phenomena is the theophanic world; in no way is it an illusion—its existence is real, since it is actually the theophany, the other self of the absolute. From this point of view, there is no real difference between Essence and Attributes: being is identical with thought. In agreement with Ibn al-'Arabi, al-Jili writes: 'We are ourselves the Attributes by means of which we describe God.' (In their *hadith,* the Shiite Imams declare: 'We are the Names, the Attributes...', thereby providing speculative theosophy with its Imamic basis.) The Perfect Man is cosmic thought, the microcosm in which all the Attributes come together; in him the Absolute becomes aware of itself. The theophanies exhibit three phases: there is the theophany of Unitude (the epiphany of the Names with which Perfect Man is united); there is the theophany of the Ipseity or epiphany of the Attributes; and there is the theophany of the divine Egoity or epiphany of the Essence. At this point, the Perfect Man has attained his fullest reality, the Absolute has returned to itself. At each period there are Perfect Men who are the epiphany of the pure metaphysical Muhammadan Reality *(Haqiqah muhammadiya),* the Muhammadan Logos or eternal prophetic Reality.

This last proposition is the basis for a speculative prophetology which is actually derived from Shiite prophetology, and which reproduces the main features of primitive Judaeo-Christian prophetology (the theme of the *Verus propheta).* What we have just said will in turn enable us to understand why mention was made, in our general survey, of the 'speculative theologians' of the 'Hegelian right' at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is, of course, the difference that here the Johannic Logos is conceived along the same lines as in Arian Christology. The tone of al-Jill's book, moreover, is characterized by a dramatic symbolism which is familiar to all gnostics. It is an epic of the Spirit, a 'narrative metaphysics'. It tells how the Stranger who is the Spirit returns after his long exile and captivity to the country of Yuh, and enters the vast city in which Khidr reigns over the 'men of the invisible'. There are profound affinities between al-Jili and Ibn al-'Arabi, although these do not annul the differences between them (which appear, for example, in connection with the theory of theophanies). With research in its present state, it would be premature to attempt to define either the affinities or the differences with any finality.

11. NI'MAT ALLAH WALI AL-KIRMANI

The name of Ni'mat Allah Wali al-Kirmani is inseparable from the history of Shiite Sufism in Iran over the last seven centuries. Amir Nur al-Din Ni'mat Allah was born in 730/1329-1330 to a family of Sayyids who were descended from the Fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir (115/733). When he was twenty-four years old he made a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he stayed for seven years and became one of the principal disciples of Shaykh 'Abd Allah al-Yafi'i (768/1366-1367). He lived successively in Samarqand, Herat and Yazd; he was in favour with Shah-Rukh, the son of Timur, and he finally settled in south-eastern Iran, in Mahan near Kirman, where he spent the last years of his life and to which his disciples flocked. He died there on the 22nd Rajab 834/5th April 1431, more than a hundred years old. It is true that some sources put the date of his death between 820/1417 and 834/1431. Apart from a *diwan* of mystical poems, he left about one hundred shorter works, amounting to about a thousand pages. As these are in the process of being edited, we cannot attempt a methodical classification of them in the way necessary for an overall summary.

These short works always deal with some theme current in mystical

theosophy and centred on a Quranic verse, a *hadith* of the Imams, a passage from Ibn al-'Arabi, and so on; by preference they focus on some specifically Twelver Shiite motif, such as the Twelfth Imam, or the *walayah* as the divine favour which sacralizes the holy Imams and which is the esoteric aspect of prophecy. "The esoteric aspect of the *walayah* contains the Essential Unity which is the absolute *Absconditum.* But the plurality of knowledge is the level of the eternal haecceities, for the eternally Manifested is clothed with plurality. The eternal haecceities are the forms of the divine Names on the level of knowledge, for the epiphany of the divine Names and Attributes, as regards their own distinctive features, postulates the multiplication of the Names.'

Today, Mahan is a sanctuary of Iranian Sufism and is visited by countless pilgrims. Ni'mat Allah is honoured as the king *(shah)* of dervishes, and is called 'Shah Ni'mat Allah Wali'. Later on we shall see this qualification propagated in his Order, the *Ni'matullahi* order, to which the majority of the Shiite *turuqs* in present-day Iran belong. The other group is that of the *Dhahabis* (see below, p. 316).

12. HURUFIS AND BEKTASHIS

It is to be regretted that we can only devote a few lines to the school of the Hurufis, that is to say of the initiates who practise the 'philosophical science of letters' (*'ilm al-huruf).* This could be described as a metaphysical algebra which in concept and method resembles that with which we are acquainted in the Jewish Cabbalah. In fact, the science of the philosophical alphabet and arithmosophy have been present from the beginning: tradition attributes their institution to the Sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, and from century to century we find traces of them in most of our mystical theosophers. But in speaking of the school or 'sect' of the Hurufis, we have in mind the particular school which owes its existence to Fadi Allah of Astarabad, a man with a tragic destiny who was executed by Timur in 804/1401-1402. According to his teaching, the summit of the degrees of being is the degree of the Word as the intimate and esoteric ground of being and of beings. In order for this esoteric aspect to be revealed, the Word must be uttered, and for this a 'clashing together' is necessary. But the phenomenon of this sonority does not derive from the external aspect of the things and beings which come together; it emanates from within them, from their inner or esoteric aspect.

As an established school, the Hurufi 'sect' seems to have disappeared very quickly. From Persia it went to Turkey, where the Bektashi dervishes became the representatives and the guardians of its doctrines. The order of Bektashis originated with Hajji Bektash (738/ 1337-1338), who, in spite of atrocious persecution, played a truly considerable role in the spiritual and cultural life of ancient Turkey down to the first third of this century. But the order observed a strict esotericism, and this has made it difficult to study its doctrines, in which we may perceive a strong neo-Platonic influence and a perception of things which is fundamentally Twelver Shiite. Mention should be made of the connection between the study of the symbolism of the features of human physiognomy and the most astonishing achievements of calligraphy. Here again is an inexhaustible mine for the phenomenology of symbolic forms.

13. JAMI

Symbolic forms are likewise the material of the poetic part of the work of Mulla Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Jami. He was an Iranian from Khurasan who was born at Jam in 817/1414, and after lengthy travel—two pilgrimages to Mashhad, to Mecca, and sojourns at Baghdad, Damascus and Tabriz—he settled at Herat, where he died in 898/1492. 'He was one of the most remarkable geniuses whom Persia ever produced, for he was at once a great poet, a great scholar, and a great mystic' says E.G. Browne. He belonged to the Sufi order of the *Naqshbandiya*, and his shaykh, Sa'd al-Din Muhammad al-Kashgari, had been the disciple and successor of the order's founder, Khwajah Baha'al-Din al-Naqshband {d. 790/1388).

All his work is of interest for the metaphysics of Sufism. There are long treatises in prose, among them a commentary on the *Lama'at (Illuminations)* by the famous Fakhr al-Din al-'Iraqi (d. *ca.* 698/1289), a small treatise composed by the latter on the occasion when he attended the lessons given by Sadr al-Din al-Qunyawi at Quniyah (see page 296). Al-'Iraqi was a typical wandering dervish (*qalandar)*, unconcerned about his reputation, and attentive solely to the human beauty which he saw as the mirror of divine beauty. Jami also put together a large collection of Sufi biographies *{Nafahat al-uns, The Breaths of Divine Intimacy)*. His *opera minora* include commentaries on Ibn al-'Arabi and Sadr al-Din al-Quniyawi. Given the lack of editions and

preliminary studies, it is difficult to give a summary of his entire production. His poetical work consists chiefly of a 'heptalogy' *(Haft Awrang, The Seven Thrones)*. Of the seven moments of which it is constituted, special mention must be made of three mystical epics: *Joseph and Zulaykha*, *Majnun and Layla* (the Tristan and Iseult of the Persian mystical epic), and *Salaman and Absal*. Two versions exist of this last symbolic tale: one is the version of Avicenna which we know through a summary of it by Nasir Tusi, and the other is Hermetic in origin. It was the Hermetic version, not the Avicennan, that Jami orchestrated into a long poem.

14. HUSAYN KASHIFI

Husayn Wa'iz Kashifi (d. 910/15 04-1505) was great Iranian preacher and spiritual figure of the time. He left about thirty works dealing with different questions of mystical theosophy, including a great mystical commentary on the Quran, and a *Garden* (or *Panegyric) of Martyrs (Rawzat al-shuhada')* which is a commentary on the persecutions suffered by the prophets and the Imams, especially the drama of Karbala'. However, although the Persian genius excels in metaphysics and mysticism rather than in ethics, Western Orientalists of the last century have shown most interest in the encyclopaedia of practical philosophy *(Akhlaq-i muhsini)* written by Husayn Kashifi, a work which succeeds two other examples of the genre, one composed by Nasir al-Din Tusi *(Akhlaq-i nasiri)* and the other by Jalal al-Din Dawwani *(Akhlaq-i jalali)*.

We speak of Kashifi here, however, mainly in connection with a lengthy work, a *Futuwwah -Namah*, in which he makes a thorough study of the theme which we mentioned above when speaking of the work of 'Umar al-Suhrawardi: the *futuwwah*, the spiritual chivalry and guild. He recapitulates all the data furnished by tradition in order to describe this characteristic phenomenon of Islamic society. The idea of the *futuwwah* appears to be essentially bound up with the relationship between the prophetic mission and the Imamic charisma (the *walayah* as the esoteric aspect of prophecy) as envisaged by Shiism. Viewed in this manner, the *futuwwah* originated with Seth, the son of the Imam Adam, the 'first Sufi', in whose person the *futuwwah* is not yet differentiated from the *tariqah*—that is to say, from the mystical way or Sufism. (One may discern faint resemblances with the role of Seth in gnostic

writings, and with the identification of him with Agathodaimon among the Hermetics.) When men no longer possessed the strength to wear the cloak of Sufism (the *khirqah),* it was Abraham who founded the *futuwwah* as distinct from Sufism. In the person of Abraham the prophetic mission was henceforth assimilated to a chivalric service. By cutting across the cycle of prophecy and the cycle of the *walayah,* the *futuwwah* determines the division of historiosophy into periods. The cycle of prophecy was initiated by Adam, its pole was Abraham, and the Seal which brought it to a close was Muhammad. The cycle of the *futuwwah* was initiated by Abraham, its pole was the First Imam, and its Seal was the Twelfth Imam, the Imam of the Resurrection, the Longed-for One *(muntazai),* who at present is invisible. As the *futuwwah* has had members from all the communities of the Book *{Ahl al-Kitab),* Abraham is thus the father of a spiritual chivalry *(Abu al-fityan)* whose esoteric ecumenism brings together all three branches of the Abrahamic tradition.

15. 'ABD AL-GHANIAL-NABLUSl

The Syrian theosopher and mystic 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nablusi (meaning from Nabulus in Samaria), who died at Damascus in 1143/1731, was a prolific writer in the tradition of Ibn al-'Arabi (he left an excellent commentary on the *Fusus* in two great quarto volumes). His work comprises no less than a hundred and forty-five titles, and touches on the most diverse topics—his commentary on the mystical Odes of Ibn al-Farid is famous. He was affiliated to two Sufi orders at once, the *Mawlawi* and the *Naqshbandi.* Being a follower of Ibn al-'Arabi, he had to deal with the question of theomonism {*wahdat al-wujud),* which requires a sound philosophical training if one is not to fall short of the mark.

The shaykh explains that this transcendent unity signifies that non-necessary being *{khalq,* the Creation) is in no way independent of Necessary Being *{Haqq,* the divine Being) and that it cannot be extrinsic to the being of the latter. They are distinct from each other, but the being through which they both exist is one. The existence of Necessary Being is identical with its essence, whereas the being which has a beginning, which comes into being, exists through the existence which is identical with the essence of Necessary Being. But as Necessary Being is not identical with the essence of being which has a beginning,

so the being of the latter is not identical with the actual essence of Necessary Being. The same unique 'existence' belongs, in its own right, to Necessary Being, and it belongs, through Necessary Being, to non-necessary being. In the first case, it is unconditional and unique; in the second it is conditioned. It is to be hoped that a complete edition of the works of al-Nablusi, and a general study of them, will shortly appear.

Since it belongs to the same period in the Ottoman Empire, it is worth mentioning the work of Raghib Pasha (d. 1176/1763), 'a great Ottoman vizir from 1756 to 1763 and possessor of a beautiful library, who left a collection of interesting observations on the main problems of Islamic culture' {L. Massignon).

16. NUR 'ALI-SHAH AND THE SUFI RENEWAL AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

We have drawn attention elsewhere to the paradoxical situation of Shiism, which forced the esotericists of integral Shiite persuasion to practise a strict 'discipline of the arcane' with regard to those of their co-religionists who confined themselves to the legalistic and exoteric religion. This discipline becomes perhaps even more effective when it is practised outside any adherence to a Sufi order, since any external testimony then disappears. Furthermore, from the beginning of the Safavid dynasty—the very name betrays its Sufi origins (Safi al-Din al-Ardabili)—Sufism was infected with politics and at the same time its spirit and customs were relaxed, to such a point that the words *tasawwuf and* Sufism became suspect and it was preferable to use the terms *'him* (mystical theosophy) and *'urafa'* (mystical theosophers). Thus the great philosopher Sadrah al-Shirazi, a 'Sufi' as regards his inner life, wrote a book denouncing an entire group of ignorant and profligate Sufis. We must also bear in mind the situation to which we have already alluded: a Shiite adept knows that he has already set out along the mystical way in virtue of the fact that he follows the integral teaching of the holy Imams, without having to belong to an established Sufi *tariqah.* From this point of view, there can be *turuq* which are transmitted from individual to individual by oral teaching, in a form which leaves no material traces or archives. In short, when, thanks to those whom we shall mention in the following chapter, the philosophical and spiritual life still flourished, Iranian Sufism at the end of

the Safavid period was in a state of total decadence, characterized by the weakening and disintegration of all the established Sufi *turuq.* All that was left were a few Sufis of the *Nurbakhshi* order in Mashhad, and a few of the *Dhahabi order* at Shiraz.

It was during this time that a dervish or *Ni'mat Allahi* Sufi from India, Ma'sum 'Ali, reached the coast of Fans (Persia) by sea and settled with his family at Shiraz between 1190/1776and 1193/1779. He had been sent from India by his spiritual master, Shaykh Shah 'Ali Rida Dakhani, to restore the *Ni'mat Allahi* order in Iran—an order which, while it owes its name to Shah Ni'mat Allah Wali (see p.308), goes back originally to the Eighth Shiite Imam, the Imam 'Ali Rida (203/818) through Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (200/815-816). Ma'sum 'Ali Shah succeeded in his task of spiritual restoration. At this point another great figure in the history of Iranian Sufism makes his appearance: Nur 'Ali-Shah.

Nur 'Ali-Shah was born at Isfahan in 1170/1756-1757 or 1172/1759, the son of Fayz 'Ali-Shah (Mirza 'Abd al-Husayn), himself the son of Mulla Muhammad 'Ali, Imam-Jum'ah of Tabas, a large oasis in the north-eastern part of the central desert. The echoes of the revival inspired by the appearance of Ma'sum 'Ali-Shah reached Isfahan, and father and son decided to leave together for Shiraz, where they became each other's spiritual brothers by joining the *tariqah* of Ma'sum 'ali-Shah. By all accounts, it appears that Nur 'Ali-Shah, who was renowned for his beauty, was a fascinating character. The enthusiasm and loyalty of his followers was unfortunately matched by the unbridled hatred of the pious bigots and exotericists *(ahl-i zahir).* Nur 'Ali-Shah died and was buried at Mosul in 1212/1797-1798, aged just forty. We should add that he married the sister of Runaq 'Ali-Shah, a woman of great spiritual and poetic gifts who herself composed a *diwan* of poems under the pseudonym of Hayyati.

He left some ten works, notable among which is the vast Persian rhapsody entitled *Jannat al-wisal (The Paradise of the Mystical Union),* consisting of one thousand two hundred and twelve pages in large octavo format in the most recent edition. In this monumental work, the great themes of Sufi theosophy and experiential mysticism are collected together and discussed in a way which is peculiar to the author (or authors). The work was to have comprised eight books, symbolic of the 'eight gates' of Paradise. In fact it was never completed: Nur

'Ali-Shah died before he had even finished Book HI. It was his brother-in-law and successor, Runaq 'Ali-Shah, who continued the work, completed Book HI and composed Books IV and V. Nizam 'Ali-Shah al-Kirmani {1242/1826-1827) in his turn composed Books VI and VII. Certain members of the order were extremely prolific writers. Muzaffar 'Ali-Shah, at Kirmanshah in 1215/1800-1801, wrote among other things a treatise entitled *Majma 'al-bihar (The Meeting of the Seas),* in which the teaching of Ibn al-'Arabi mingles with the teaching of those Shiite *hadith* which are most gnostic in spirit. He also wrote a *Kibrit al-ahmar (The Philosopher's Stone),* a *Bahr al-asrar (The Ocean of Mystical Secrets),* and various other works. At Kirman he had been the disciple of Mushtaq 'Ali-Shah, who died a martyr to Shiism in 1206/1791-1792 during a popular uprising.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, under the pseudonym of Sayyaf, a dervish from Shiraz also composed a vast rhapsody whose title is reminiscent of Nur 'Ali-Shah's: *Kanz al-asrar wa Jannat al-wisal (The Treasure of Mystical Secrets and the Paradise of Union).* This work is enormous, consisting of about three thousand pages in the recently printed edition. It covers the field of mystical gnosis in twelve books, and the *hadith* of one of the Imams usually serve as the motif which introduces the verse commentary. It was completed in 1260/1844.

Another Ma'sum 'Ali-Shah, born at Shiraz in 1270/1853-1854 and died in 1344/1925-1926, left among other works a vast general encyclopaedia of Sufism in Persian, the *Tara'iq al-haqa'iq,* consisting of three large volumes in the recent edition.

We must at least mention Safi 'Ali-Shah, who was born at Isfahan in 1251/1835-1836. He lived in India before settling in Tehran, where he died, surrounded by many disciples, in 1316/1898-1899. His influence on the Iranian society of the time was considerable. Among other works, he left a monumental mystical *tafsir of* the Quran in verse (eight hundred and twenty-six folio pages in the edition of 1318 AH/ 1950). The *tariqah* of Safi 'Ali-Shah is still very much alive today. Mention should also be made of Sultan 'Ali-Shah (1327/1909) of Gonabad in Khurasan, who was succeeded by his son Nur 'Ali-Shah II (1337/1918-1919), whose influence was enormous and whose work was considerable. Today Gonabad is still the general area of a vast Sufi network which penetrates all levels of Iranian society. There

are many other *Ni'mat Allahi* shaykhs who deserve to be mentioned here. At present, the *khanaqah-i ni'matullahi has* Dr Javad Nurbakhsh as its 'pole', a man of prodigious activity. Under his leadership, the *khanaqah* has been reconstructed and expanded to acquire the dimensions of a Sufi university (with library, manuscripts, museum of calligraphy, etc.). Dr Nurbakhsh is extending the publication of ancient texts, and during the last years he has founded about fifty *new khanaqah* all over Iran. To his authority as a Sufi shaykh is added his competence as a doctor of neuropsychology, with a total grasp of the limits of psychoanalysis.

17. THE DHAHABIS

As we saw above, the Sufi order of *Kubrawiya* divided into two branches after the death of Sayyid 'Ali al-Hamadhani. His disciple Khwajah Ishaq Khutallani had named Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh (795/1390 -869/1464) as his successor. Unfortunately, Mir Shihab al-Din 'Abd Allah Barzishabadi refused to acknowledge him. From then on there were two distinct lines, of the *Nurbakhshiya* and the *Dhahabiya*. The latter stressed their spiritual descent which, like that of the Ni'mat Allahis, went back through Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (200/815-816) to the Eighth Imam, the Imam 'Ali al-Rida (203/818). Their Twelver Shiite fervour may be sensed in their writings on the metaphysics of Sufism.

Special mention must be made of the Dhahabi shaykh Najib al-Din al-Rida. He was a native of Tabriz who settled in Isfahan, where he died in 1080/1670 during the reign of Shah Sulayman (1666-1694). Two important works by him have been published: one is the *Nur al-hidayah* (*The Light of Spiritual Orientation)*, and the other the *Sa'b al-mathani (mathnawi* on the Twelfth Imam). There are two particularly active Dhahabi publication centres at Shiraz and Tabriz. At Shiraz, the publications include the works of shaykh Agha Mirza Abu al-Qasim, who is better known by his honorary titles and pseudonyms of 'Baba-yi Shirazi' or 'Raz-i Shirazi', and who was succeeded by his son Majd al-Ashraf (1264/1848-1330/1912). Among other things, we are indebted to him for two important treatises of mystical theosophy. One is commentary on a famous gnostic sermon attributed to the First Imam, the *Khutbah al-Bayan* or *Sermon of the Great Declaration.* The other treatise, entitled *Manahij anwar al ma'rifah* (*The Paths of the Light of Gnosis)* is a commentary on the treatise attributed to the Sixth Imam

Ja'far al-Sadiq, *Misbah al-shari'ah* (*The Lamp which illumines literal religion).* At Tabriz, work has begun on the publication of the works of one of his followers, Mirza 'Abd al-Karim Rayaz al-Din al-Shirazi, otherwise known by his *tariqah* name of 'A'jubah 'Arif 'All-Shah' (1299/1882), which include a valuable study on Mahmud al-Shabistar's *Rosary of Mystery (see* p. 305). He left a large number of manuscripts, totalling about forty-one titles. Shams al-Din Parvizi has taken on the task of editing them.

These few pages may have given some idea of Sufism and its metaphysics; they will certainly have communicated an even stronger sense of the immense tasks that remain to be done. The following chapter will strengthen this impression still further.

. Shiite Thought

1. NASIR AL-DIN TUSI AND THE SHIITE KALAM

A Shiite *kalam* does exist. The word *kalam* designates the method of discursive exposition in which the resources of the dialectic inherited from the Greek philosophers are put at the service of the religious concepts posited by the Quran and the *hadith* (tradition). The exclusive *mutakallim* represents the type of the exoteric theologian. Nevertheless, the same religious theme which can be discussed from the exoteric point of view of the *kalam*, can also be handled with all the resources of mystical theosophy, of which the metaphysics of Sufism offers, as we have seen, notable examples. The same thinker may combine in himself both the abilities of a *mutakallim* and those of the philosopher and mystical theosopher, who is not content to dwell on concepts alone. This is most commonly the case in Shiism, and one of the main reasons for it may be found to lie in the teaching itself of the holy Imams. Nasir al-Din Tusi is a case in point.

Khwajah Nasir, or Master Nasir, which is the most common form of his name, was a man of universal genius (his bibliography numbers some eighty titles), to the extent that the culture of his time permitted. He was born at Tus in Khurasan on the 11th Jumada I 597/18th February 1201, and he died at Baghdad on the 18th Dhu al-Hijjah 672/26th January 1274. He had an adventurous youth in the service of the Ismaili princes in Quhistan, which explains his stay at the fortress of Alamut and the composition of an Ismaili treatise of which we will speak later. The situation became dangerous when the Mongols seized Alamut in 654/1256, but Khwajah Nasir handled it so well that he became adviser to Hulagu Khan and interceded with him for the Imamite Shiites, thus sparing them many of the horrors that followed the capture of Baghdad in 656/1258. He it was who then persuaded the Mongol sovereign to build the great observatory of Maraghah in Azerbaijan.

Khwajah Nasir was a mathematician and an astronomer (he wrote commentaries on Euclid's *Elements* and Ptolemy's *Almagest,* and composed a treatise on questions dealing with geometrical and physiological optics). In philosophy, he wrote a study in commentary form on Avicenna's *Isharat,* which 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji four centuries later considered to be the best treatise on Avicenna ever written. Khwajah Nasir defended Avicenna against Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and again in a special treatise written in reply to Shahrastani. It could be said that if Iranian Avicennism, unlike the Latin Avicennism which died a premature death, has continued down to our days, it was Nasir Tusi who was its chief agent. In Shiite theology, his main works are *Tajrid al- 'aqa'id (The Freeing of the Articles of Faith), Qawa'id al- 'aqa'id* {*The Foundation of the Articles of Faith),* and the *FUSUL OR* 'chapters', written in Persian. In these works, the great themes of Shiite thought—the Imamate, the Twelfth Imam, and so on—are systematized. Over the centuries the first two have been the subject of some seventy commentaries and studies, and these urgently need to be inventoried, analyzed and placed in a historical context. The high point of Khwajah Nasir's work and spiritual physiognomy is not so much practical philosophy (the treatise entitled *Akhlaq-i nasIri)* as a Sufism which is as profoundly mystical as it is Shiite, expressed in the short treatise *Awsaf al-ashraf (The Characterology of Noble Souls).* Since Shiism recapitulated the aspirations of Iranian religious awareness, while philosophy faded out in the rest of the *Dar al-Islam* but remained alive in the Iranian schools, it is evident that Khwajah Nasir was the 'figurehead' of Shiite thinking.

Of the followers and the men nearest to Khwajah Nasir, we should mention Kamal al-Din Maytham al-Bahrani (678/1279-1280). A traditional saying has it that if he was Nasir TusI's pupil in philosophy, the latter was his pupil in canon law (*fiqh).* He was also one of the masters of 'Allamah-i Hilli (see below). He left about fifteen works (not all the manuscripts have yet been located), several of which concern the problems of the Imamate of the Shiite Imams. He is best known for his twofold commentary in more than twenty volumes on the collection of sayings, letters and sermons by the First Imam, entitled *Nahj al-balaghah.* Maytham al-Bahrani was among those thinkers who combined the *kalam,* philosophy and mysticism (*'irfan).* Haydar Amuli

numbers him among the true philosophers who are heirs to the prophets and who are not content with exoteric knowledge.

> Among them is the perfect shaykh Maytham al-Bahrani, who in his twofold commentary, major and minor, on the *Nahj al-balaghah* preferred the methods of the theomonist gnostics, who trace their origins and their cloak *(khirqah)* back to the First Imam, to those of the scholars and professional philosophers. Similarly, in his commentary on the collection of the sayings of the First Imam entitled *Centiloquium,* he states that the truth unmitigated by doubt is the way of the theomonists among the men of God who are called Sufis.

Khwajah Nasir's most famous disciple was certainly 'Allamah-i Hilli (his full name is Jamal al-Din Abu Mansur Hasan ibn Yusuf ibn Mutahhar al-Hilli), who was born in 648/1250-1251 at Hillah, and who died there in 726/1325. Among his teachers were al-Katibi (Dabiran) al-Qazwini (see p.265) and Maytham al-Bahrani. Like al-Bahrani and Khwajah Nasir, 'Allamah-i Hilli was contemporary with the Mongol upheaval, and played a role similar to that of his teacher. According to the testimony of the Shiite historians, his influence was decisive at the conferences to which Uljaytu summoned the leaders of the different religious persuasions, and the authority of his answers was such that from that moment Shiism was recognized as the official religion of Persia, and was able to come out of hiding. 'Allamah-i Hilli was a prolific writer whose bibliography comprises about one hundred and twenty titles. Some of his works have been published, while the manuscripts of others have still to be found.

As we said earlier, one of his works on the concept of the Shiite Imamate *(Minhaj al-karamah)* was the object of a violent Sunni attack by Ibn Taymiya (see above, p.273). Besides various treatises on canon law, 'Allamah established a systematic version of the science of tradition *(hadith* and *akhbar),* based on principles which were later to antagonise the *usuliyun* and the *akhbariyun* (see p.354). In the *kalam* tradition, he left a commentary on one of the very first treatises to be written by one of the oldest Imamite *mutakallimun,* Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Nawbakhti, who died about 350/961. Similarly, he wrote commentaries on the two treatises by Khwajah Nasir mentioned above, *Tajrid* and *Qawa'id*-commentaries which have been read and re-read, studied and commentated by generations of scholars. He left a summary of the vast commentary by his teacher Maytham al-Bahrani on the *Nahj*

al-balaghah. Using the methods both of a man of the *kalam* and of a philosopher, he wrote studies on Avicenna's Is*harat (Directives)* and *Shifa' (Cure);* attempted to solve the difficulties *(hill al-mushkilat)* of al-Suhrawardi's *Talwihat (Book of Elucidations);* wrote a treatise comparing *(tanasub)* the Ash'arites and the Sophists; two other encyclopaedic treatises, *The Hidden Secrets (al-Asar al-khaffyah)* in philosophical sciences, the autograph version of which is at Najaf, and a *Complete Course of Instruction (Ta'lim tamm)* on philosophy and the *kalam,* etc. He casts doubt on the principle *Ex Uno non fit nisi Unum* (only One can proceed from the One), as his teacher Nasir Tusi, inspired by al-Suhrawardi, had done before him, and he concedes the existence of an intra-substantial motion which heralds the theory of Mulla Sadra.

In short, even though, as a preliminary to a monograph on the whole *opus,* a detailed study of his work remains to be done, we are already in a position to say that his example and his books were decisive in making philosophy 'at home' in Shiism, and in enabling it to defend itself against the attacks of the doctors of the exoteric Law.

The tradition originating with' Allamah Hilli is a long one, and brings us up to the tragic confrontation between the Shiite and the Sunni *kalams* in the persons of three men who are designated in Shiite nomenclature by the honorary name of *shahid* (martyr), meaning men who died as true witnesses to the cause of the holy Imams. *Shahid-i awwal,* the 'protomartyr', was Shaykh Shams al-Din Muhammad who, in 751/1350, at the age of seventeen, had been a pupil of Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqln, the son of 'Allamah-i Hilli. He wrote around twenty works, and was executed at Damascus in 786/1384. *Shahid-i thani,* the second martyr, was Shaykh Zayn al-Din ibn 'Ali, a sixth generation pupil of the pupils of 'Allamah-i Hilli. He left a considerable body of works, amounting to about eighty titles, and was executed at Istanbul in 966/1558-1559, on the orders of Sultan Salim II. Outstanding among them all is Qadi Nur Allah Shushtari, whose family was descended from the Fourth Imam Zaynal-'Abidin. He was a philosopher and a *mutakallim,* a mathematician and a poet, and he wrote about seventy works of which the best-known is the long *Majalis al-mu'minin (The Assemblies of Believers),* written in Persian, and consisting of twelve chapters with notes on eminent Shiites of all categories (philosophers, theologians, Sufis, and so on). He took part in the coming

and going between India and Iran which occurred at that time thanks to the generous reforms of Shah Akbar, the Mongol sovereign of India from 1556 to 1605. He spent some time in Lahore.

An Ash'arite Sunni named Fadi Allah ibn Ruzbihan al-Isfahani had directed a violent attack against one of 'Allamah-i Hilli's treatises, entitled *Nahj al-haqq wa-Kashf al-sidq, The Way Opened to Truth and the Revealing of Sincerity.* Fadl-Allah's work was entitled *Ibtal al-batil,* or *The Book in which Error is Annihilated.* Nur-Allah responded at length to this in five hundred folio pages, entitled Ih*qaq al-haqq, The Book which does Justice to Truth.* The book was condemned by prominent Sunnis; Jahangir, Shah Akbar's successor, ordered the author to appear in court, and Qadi Nur-Allah was sentenced to a cruel martyrdom in 1019/1610-1611. He thus became the *shahid-isuvvum,* or third martyr. The work entitled *Ihqaq al-haqq* includes a juridical section, but also has a lengthy and extended section on philosophy. When we bring together the attacks of Ibn Taymiyah and Fadl-Allah ibn Ruzbihan against 'Allamah-i Hilli, and the intervention of Nur-Allah Shushtari and his tragic fate, it is clear that a comprehensive and thorough study is required, for without it an important chapter in Islamic philosophy must remain ill-defined.

Mention should be made of Ibn Yunus al-Nabati al-'Amili (877/1472-1473). He was a Shiite philosopher who principally owes his reputation to two lengthy works, one on the Imamate *(Kitab al-sirat al-mustaqlm, The Book of the Right Way),* and the other entitled *The Open Door on what is said Concerning the Soul (nafs) and the Spirit Ruh.* Al-Majlisi cites this work as one of his sources in his great encyclopaedia of Shiite *hadith,* the *Bihar al-anwar.* Ibn Yunus wrote other treatises on logic, on the *kalam,* on the Imamate, and on the divine Names.

Finally, there is a highly original philosopher whom we will include in this category, named Afdal al-Din Kashani, not because he was a *mutakallim,* but because of his relationship with Nasir al-Din Tusi—a relationship which is still unclear at the present state of research. According to some traditions, he may have been the latter's uncle on his mother's side. He lived during the first two-thirds of our thirteenth century, although we do not know the exact dates of his birth and death. He lived at the time of Hulagu Khan, and it is said that he played the same beneficial role in relation to the Mongols as Khwajah Nasir, and

he certainly succeeded in preserving his native town of Kashan from destruction.

The fact that he was a friend of Nasir Tusi is evident from two distichs that the latter wrote in his praise. It has also been recorded that the *ta'wil*—the symbolic hermeneutic of Quranic verses and *hadith* practised by Afdal al-Din—carries certain Ismaili overtones. This would accord very well with a statement by Khwajah Nasir in which he alludes to his own esotericism as having been derived from a pupil of Afdal al-Din. Afdal al-Din was a philosopher and a poet who wrote under the pseudonym of Baba Afdal, and whose work is written entirely in Persian. It consists of twelve treatises of which we will mention only the *Madarij al-kamal (The Degrees of Perfection),* which is an excellent account of philosophical anthropology, and the *Javdan-namah* or *Book of the Eternal,* perhaps the most original of his works, in which the philosopher, having spoken of self-knowledge, discusses the origin and the end of things as a 'prologue and epilogue in heaven'. We may note that Afdal al-Din was responsible for a translation into Persian of the *Liber de pomo,* a pseudo-Aristotlelian treatise, and the *Yanbu' al-hayat (The Origins of Life),* a Hermetic treatise which also exists in Arabic, and is edited with the title of the Latin translation *De castigatione animae.* As regards the latter, certain parallel passages have been discovered in the Greek text of the *Corpus hermeticum.* This interest in Hermes, who is identified with Idris and Enoch, presages an affinity with al-Suhrawardi, the *Shaykh al-Ishraq.*

In the critical history of the philosophers that he gives in his great book *Jami' al-asrar,* Haydar Amuli expressly mentions Afdal al-Din as one of those who, having deepened philosophy and the official exoteric sciences, returns to 'the way of the men of God'. 'Afdal al-Din', he says, 'Was one of the greatest.'

2. THE ISMAILIS

We have already spoken of the origins of Ismailism and the recurring themes of Ismaili metaphysics. We may recall briefly some of the main facts. On the death of the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir bi-Allah in 487/1094, the succession provoked a schism in the Ismaili community. Firstly, there were those who recognized the legitimacy of the Imam al-Musta'li, and who were to perpetuate the ancient Fatimid *da'wah*

down to the present day. But ever since the assassination of the caliph al-Amir in 524/1130, they have experienced, like the Twelver Shiites, a period of the Imam's occultation. They withdrew to Yemen, and in the sixteenth century their headquarters was transferred to India, where they were known as the *Bohras.* Secondly, there were those who remained loyal to the legitimacy of the Imam Nizar, whose grandson was miraculously rescued by his faithful initiates and taken to safety in the fortress of Alamut in Iran. There, on the 8th August 1164, the Imam Hasan *'ala dhikrihi al-salam* (he is always designated by these words, which mean 'Hail to the mention of his name') proclaimed the Great Resurrection, according to which Ismailism became a pure gnosis, a purely personal religion of the Resurrection. With regard to the meaning of this proclamation, it is here above all that we must repeat that *Resurrectio non est factum historicum sed mysterium liturgicum.* Barely a century later, in 1256, the fortress of Alamut and the other Ismaili command-posts in Iran were destroyed by the Mongols. The last Imam, Rakn al-Din Shah, was murdered, but his son and his descendants survived under the mantle of Sufism, first in the Southern Caucasus, and later at Anjudan (between Hamadhan and Isfahan). It is this Imamic line of the reformed Ismailism of Alamut which has lasted down to our times, until Karim Agha-Khan IV. This branch is established mainly in the Iranian centres on the high plateaux of central Asia, and in India, where its initiates are known as *Khojas.*

Without this schema, it is impossible to grasp the situation of Ismailism with regard to the history of philosophy. The literature of Alamut was destroyed with the destruction of its library. Its literary output since then has been exceedingly feeble, owing to the unfavourable circumstances. By contrast, the branch of the *Bohras has* preserved entire collections. The tragedy for the philosopher is that while the *Khojas,* being more liberal-minded, are prepared to publish texts in order to make Ismailism known, all the manuscripts are in the possession of the *Bohras,* who continue to observe such a discipline of secrecy that of the seven hundred and seventy titles compiled by the late W. Ivanow (including the Druze texts), only a few dozen have up to now been accessible.

The *Musta'li* branch, since the end of the Fatimid dynasty, has included a number of prolific authors, beginning in the period which

is known as neo-Yemeni. We must confine ourselves here to mentioning the names of a few great Yemeni *da %* whose work consisted mainly in constructing massive Summas of Ismaili metaphysics and Imamology: the 2nd *da'i*, Ibrahim ibn al-Husayn al-Hamidi (d. 557/1162); the 3rd *da'i*, Hatim ibn Ibrahim; the 5th *da'i*, 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Walid (d.612/1215), to whom we are indebted, among other things, for a vast work (the *Damigh al-batil*, whose manuscript of twelve hundred pages in being studied and edited), which is the Ismaili reply to the great anti-Ismaili polemic by al-Ghazali, the *Mustazhiri;* the 8th *da'i*, Husayn ibn 'Ali (d. 657/1268), who left among other works a compendium of Ismaili metaphysics and eschatology, which has been edited; the 19th *da'i*, Idris 'Imad al-Din (d. 872/1468), who left a considerable body of historical and philosophical works (principally his *Zahr al-ma'ani*, which is in the process of being studied and edited). All this brings us to the Indian period, where we will draw attention to an enormous Summa by Hasan ibn Nuh al-Hindi al-Bharuchi (d. 939/1533), in seven great volumes which are known in the form of a summary, and in which we shall find all the essential elements of Ismaili history and metaphysics when we finally gain access to a manuscript. During this period, the *Musta'li* branch divided into two: the *Dawudi and* the *Sulaymani*. Here again, dozens of titles of works are known, but they are unfortunately no more than titles for the researcher.

Of the *Nizari* literature—that is to say, the literature of the reformed Ismailism of Alamut, which is entirely in Persian—two treatises by Nasir al-Din Tusi have fortunately been preserved, whose Ismaili 'associations' we drew attention to above. There is absolutely no decisive reason to doubt the authenticity of these two treatises, the most important of which is entitled *Rawdat al-taslim*. It was under the cloak *(khirqah)* of Sufism that Ismailism survived in Iran after the destruction of Alamut, and since then there has always been an ambiguity in Sufi literature itself. The long poem by Mahmud al-Shabistari (see above, page 305) contains echoes of Ismailism, and there is a partial Ismaili commentary of the *Rosary of Mystery*, which has been edited. Likewise, it was often in the form of treatises in verse that Nizari literature of the Alamut tradition was perpetuated. Quhistani (d. *ca.* 720/1320) appears to have been the first to make use of Sufi terminology in expressing Ismaili doctrines. The Imam Jalal al-Din

al-Mustansir bi-Allah II (880/1480), who lived and died in Anjudan under his surname Shah Qalandar, wrote an *Exhortation to Spiritual Chivalry (Pandiyat-i javanmardi)*, a concept whose significance for Shiism and Sufism has already been noted. Sayyid Suhrab Wali Badakhshani, who was writing in 856/1452, and Abu Ishaq Quhistani, who lived in the second half of the fifteenth century, both left a clear account of Ismaili philosophy. Khayr-Khwah—the *Benevolens*—of Herat (d. after 960/1553) was a prolific author and was chiefly responsible for the *Kalam-i pir (The Discourse of the Sage)*, an extension of Abu Ishaq Quhistani's *Seven Chapters*, which is, together with Nasir Tusi's *Rawdat al-taslim*, the most complete survey we possess of Ismaili philosophy of the alamuti tradition. Khaki Khurasani, writing in 1056/1645, and his son Raqqami Dizbadi, wrote lengthy philosophical poems. Ghulam 'Ali of Ahmadnagar {1110/1690) left a work in verse, the *Lama 'at al-tahirin* (*The Illumination of the Most Pure Ones)* of no less than eleven hundred somewhat chaotic pages, in which the philosophical themes are set forth in prose. Pir Shihab al-Din Shah Husayni, the eldest son of Agha-Khan II, who was born in 1850 and who died young in 1884, left several treatises which at the very least are excellent recapitulations of Ismaili gnosis.

These are the main works of the Ismailism of Alamut, which is apparently the only Ismailism known to Twelver Shiite authors of the period. It does not, perhaps, altogether counterbalance the vast works of the neo-Yemeni *da'is*. We noted above where the tragedy lies for the philosopher. The result has been that the Ismailism which, during the tenth and eleventh centuries of our era, pioneered the most daring metaphysical thought in Islam, has almost withdrawn into silence over the last centuries. Its voice, at once original and traditional, should be heard again today—a task of which it seems that the young Ismailis are aware.

3. THE ISHRAQI CURRENT

The *ishraqi* movement of the *Ishraqiyan-i Iran* (the 'Platonists of Persia') originated in the fundamental reform effected by al-Suhrawardi, the *Shaykh al-Ishraq* (d. 587/1191), in his *Book of Oriental Theosophy (Hikmat al-ishraq)*, whose purpose was to resurrect the theosophy of the sages of ancient Persia. In the course of the ensuing centuries, it contributed—together with the assimilation of Ibn al-

'Arabi to Shiite metaphysics—to the characteristic features of Islamic philosophy. We can therefore bring together under the same heading all the thinkers who have contributed through their works to the creation of this current, even when they were not nominally of Shiite persuasion. Their works bore fruit in Shiite thinking, and it is best not to split up their respective contributions.

At the head of this tradition of 'Platonists of Persia' is Shams al-Din al-Shahrazuri (seventh/thirteenth century). It is paradoxical that we should know nothing about the life of this philosopher, when he himself devoted an entire work to the biographies of the philosophers *(Nuzhat al-arwah),* the material for which was taken from his precursors—a fact which he fails to emphasize. We are principally indebted to him for a vast Summa of all the philosophy produced in Islam up to his own time; it is entitled *Treatises on the Divine Tree and on the Secrets of Theosophy,* and should have been edited and studied long ago (it was completed in 680/1282, and a copyist's note justifies us in thinking that the author was still alive in 687/1288). We are also indebted to him for two massive commentaries on two lengthy works by al-Suhrawardi, his *Book of Elucidations (Talwihat)* and the *Book of Oriental Theosophy,* many pages of which are transcribed in the works of other commentators. He was a convinced *ishraqi,* conscious of being the person whom al-Suhrawardi had designated in advance as the 'Keeper of the Book' *(Qayyim bi'al-Kitab)* for his time. As it is probably not an accident, we should draw attention to the fact that the 'Keeper of the Book of Oriental Theosophy' fulfilled a function similar to that which was conferred by Shiism on the Imams as 'Keepers of the Book' (the Quran) in its exoteric and esoteric integrity.

Ibn Kammunah (Sa'd ibn Mansur), who died in 683/1284, was another great philosopher of the period. He was Jewish, or of Jewish descent through his grandfather (Hibat Allah, Nathanael), and certain features in his work are responsible for his being listed in the Shiite catalogues as a Twelver Imamite philosopher. He wrote one of the most serious and original commentaries—completed in 667/1268—on the three parts (logic, physics and metaphysics) of al-Suhrawardi's difficult *Book of Elucidations relating to the Table and the Throne.* He wrote a dozen other works besides, among them a *Summary of the Arguments (tanqih al-abhath) concerning the Examination of the Three Relgions* (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). The work got him

into grave trouble with the Sunni element in Baghdad. The author was inspired, it appears, by Abrahamic ecumenism.

Qutb al-Din Shirazi (Mahmud ibn Mas'ud), who was born at Shiraz in 634/1237 and who died at Tabriz in 710/1311, is possibly the most notable figure among the philosophers of the time. He was a mathematician, an astronomer, a philosopher and a Sufi, and he had had famous teachers: Nasir al-Din Tusi, Sadr al-Din Qunyawi, al-Katibi Qazwini. He wrote about fifteen works, among them an encyclopaedia of philosophy in Persian, the counterpart of al-Shahrazuri's encyclopaedia in Arabic, with the title *Durrat al-taj (The Pearl in the Crown).* It was edited in Tehran in 1320/1942, and is in two parts: firstly, prolegomena on knowledge, logic, primary philosophy, physics, metaphysics and rational theology; secondly, Euclidean geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and music. He wrote a masterly commentary on al-Suhrawardi's *Book of Oriental Theosophy,* which has remained a textbook down to our day and is indispensable for an understanding of al-Suhrawardi's extremely concise text.

Jalal al-Din Dawwani, who was born in Dawwan near Shiraz in 830/1426-1427 and who died there in 907/1501-1502, was a prolific author, attracted by many questions concerning the *kalam,* philosophy, theology and mysticism. He studied at Shiraz and travelled more or less everywhere—in Persia, India and Iraq—and was converted to Shiism as a result of a dream. We will draw attention here chiefly to his commentary on al-Suhrawardi's *Book of the Temples of Light (Hayakil al-Nur).* Many manuscripts of it are in existence, because every seeker in philosophy had read the book, especially as it provoked a counter-commentary by Ghiyath al-Din Mansur Shirazi (d. 949/1542; see p. 336). It was not the only point of conflict between the two philosophers.

In passing, mention should be made of one of Jalal al-Din Dawwani's many pupils, Amir Husayn Maybudi (Maybud is a town near Shiraz), who died in 904/1498-1499 or 911/1505-1506, and who is listed in most catalogues, not without reason, as a Shiite. He left about ten works, among them two studies: one on the *Kitab al-hidayah* by Athir al-Din al-Abhari (see p. 263) and the other on the *Diwan* by the First Imam, the prolegomena of which enabled him to expand on the great themes of Sufi metaphysics.

Two little-known personages from Tabriz are worth mentioning.

Wadud Tabrizi wrote in 930/1524 a systematic commentary on al-Suhrawardi's *Book of Tablets dedicated to 'Imad al-Din* (the Saljuq emir of Anatolia). Najm al-Din Mahmud Tabrizi, an even lesser-known contemporary of Wadud, wrote annotations on the *Book of Oriental Theosophy.* In fact, although al-Suhrawardi wrote a certain number of *opera minora* in Persian, his great treatises were written in Arabic. In 1008/1600, a certain Muhammad Sharif ibn Harawi elaborated in Persian not only on the prologue and the five books which make up the second half of the *Book of Oriental Theosophy,* but also on the commentary by Qutb al-Din Shirazi. The knowledge of things Indian revealed by the translator suggests that his initiative was connected with the generous concern that inspired the religious reform undertaken by Shah Akbar, the Mongol sovereign of India mentioned above. Indeed, *ishraqi* philosophy had considerable influence on the project of the 'ecumenical religion' conceived by Shah Akbar.

Also connected with this fermentation of philosophical and religious ideas was the incident involving Azar Kayvan, the Zoroastrian high priest, who emigrated to India with his community between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries CE. A long work in Persian written at the same period, the *Dabistan-i madhahib* (*The School of Religious Sciences)* provides us with all the information we possess on the situation which then prevailed in Zoroastrian circles, in a milieu which gave rise to a book such as the *Dasatir-namah* (*The Bible of the Ancient Prophets of Iran).* This book will only mislead the historian or the philosopher in quest of a document of primitive Zoroastrianism. On the other hand, it is of the greatest interest to the philosopher, since it is evidence of the diffusion of *ishraqi* philosophy, of which it bears unmistakable traces. Azar Kayvan's group included ardent admirers and translators of al-Suhrawardi, notable among whom was Farzanah Bahrain who lived in 1048/1638 and who left, apart from his undiscovered translations, a lengthy work in Persian entitled *The City of Four Gardens (Sharistan-i chahar chaman).* Another book in Persian which stems from the same group is entitled *Ayin-i Hushang {The Religion of Hushang,* who was an Iranian prophet-priest). The Parsees were sufficiently interested in these books to edit them; they considered the *Dasatir* to be a 'semi-Parsee' book, and there could be no better judgment than theirs. What we are confronted with here, then, is *an ishraqi* Zoroastrian literature, presently being studied, which

is a moving response to al-Suhrawardi's plans and which is evidence of the influence his philosophy exercised in seventeenth-century India.

Needless to say, the strength of the ishraqi current was not confined to those who actually commentated some work by the *Shaykh al-Ishraq.* As we shall see later, Mulla Sadra Shirazi wrote a great volume of masterly annotations on the *Book of Oriental Theosophy.* But the influence of the *ishraq* went on increasing in the case of a number of Iranian thinkers who will receive mention here. A commentator on Ibn al-'Arabi such as 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, author of a commentary on the Fusus, is already aware of the Hermetic affinities of the *ishraqiyun.* The uniting of the *ishraqi current* and of the current which originated with Ibn al-'Arabi with the great themes of Shiite theosophy conferred its final form on Irano-Islamic philosophy. This union is already a *fait accompli in* the case of Ibn Abi Jumhur (see p. 335).

4. SHIISM AND ALCHEMY: AL-JALDAKI

The 'speculative' theosophy which is thus inaugurated—a theosophy in which the subject is conscious of being the mirror or *speculum* in which things and events come about—has its counterpart in a theosophy of Nature, properly included in 'prophetic philosophy', which is consummated in alchemy. This bond is best illustrated by the great alchemist Aydamur al-Jaldaki. The bond which links al-Jaldaki's alchemy to the prophetic theosophy of Twelver Shiism corresponds to the bond uniting Jabir ibn Hayyan's alchemy to Ismaili gnosis. Al-Jaldaki was intensely aware of alchemy as a spiritual science, even while describing the processes of practical alchemy. The alchemical work, simultaneously practical and symbolic, takes place both in the *materia prima* and in man's innermost being. There is an essential connection between the idea of alchemy and Shiite Imamology, and hence between the alchemical work and the *futuwwah* as a service of spiritual chivalry, raised to a level on which it can fulfil the requirements of cosmic salvation. Alchemy is not the pre-history of present-day chemistry.

Aydamur al-Jaldaki {the correct vocalization is not Jildaki) was an Iranian from Jaldak, a town about eighteen kilometres away from Mashhad in Khurasan. He lived in Damascus, and then moved to Cairo, where he died between750/1349-1350 and 762/1360-1361. He left about fifteen works on alchemy, which have barely received attention.

We can mention here only his *Book of Demonstration Concerning the Secrets of the Science of the Balance (Kitab al-Burhan fi asrar 'ilm al-mizan),* a vast work in Arabic, comprising four sections in four great volumes.

On first reading it, one is struck by the part played in it by the more gnostic sermons *(khutab)* of the First Imam, among others the famous *Khutbat al-Bayan* referred to above. In chapter V of the second part, al-Jaldaki explains the following: alchemy is substantiated only in those who possess a high knowledge of philosophy *(hikmah)* and who assent to the message of the prophets; for this message encompasses both the exoteric imperatives of the Law and some of the secrets of superior philosophical wisdom. Likewise, the First Imam said that alchemy is 'the sister of prophecy', and that knowledge of alchemy is one of the forms of knowledge possessed by the prophets. By 'sister of prophecy' the Imam means that it is a way of designating the *hikmah:* philosophy or theosophical Wisdom. There is no doubt that the *hikmah* is the sister of prophecy. Having said this, the chapter ends by indicating a composition or combinatin *(tarkib),* the explanation of which must be sought from him who speaks from the top of the tree of the *futuwwah* and from the 'Niche of the lights of prophecy', that is to say the Imam. The passage leads on to the next chapter, which contains the commentary on Apollonius of Tyana's *Book of the Seven Statues,* which is in the form of a story of initiation (this is at present being studied).

We will mention later on two other small works on alchemy, one by Mr Findiriski and the other by Bidabadi. Similarly, where Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i and the Shaykhi school are concerned, the problems presented by the 'body of resurrection' are discussed with reference to the successive phases of the alchemical operation.

5. THE INTEGRATION OF IBN AL-'ARABI TO SHIITE METAPHYSICS

As we said above, a fact of fundamental significance is that Shiite thinkers found themselves completely at home in the work of Ibn al-'Arabi. This leads naturally to the question of Ibn al-'Arabi's early development in Andalusia. On the other hand, the veneration for the person and work of the *Doctor Maximus (al-Shaykh al-akbar)* did not exclude disagreement on certain points of doctrine which were of fundamental importance to all Shiite thinkers. The example of Haydar Amuli is a case in point.

Chronologically, we shall concentrate first on a group of two or three people who belonged to the same Shiite family, came from Khujand in Turkistan, and finally settled in Isfahan. Sadr al-Din Abu Hamid Muhammad Turkah Isfahani {seventh-eighth/thirteenth-fourteenth century: exact dates unknown) is among those thinkers praised by Haydar Amuli for not being contented with a purely theoretical philosophy. 'He too returned from his science and philosophy to the science and the men of Sufism, and he wrote several books and treatises on this subject, among them the book of absolute being.' Haydar Amuli goes on to quote an entire page from this work by our philosopher. Sadr al-Din did indeed write several works on metaphysics, the most important of which is entitled *Basic Theses concerning the Tawhid.*

His grandson Sa'in al-Din 'Ali Turkah Isfahani {died between 830/1426-1427 and 836/1432-1433) wrote a commentary on this particularly abstruse treatise, which he entitled *The Development of the Basic Theses concerning Absolute Being (Tamhid al-qawa'id fi al-wujud al-mutlaq),* and which is extraordinarily interesting for the study of Shiite metaphysics. Sa'in al-Din left a large number of works, very personal in character, and written as much in Arabic as in Persian: a commentary on Ibn al-'Arabi's *Fusus al-hikam,* a *Book of Greater Depths (mafahis),* a study of the Quranic verse 54:1 on 'the splitting asunder of the moon', whose esoteric meaning enables him to describe an original religious typology embracing the main schools of thought of his time. He also wrote studies on Mahmud al-Shabistari, on an ode *(qasidah)* by Ibn al-Farid, and so on. His works in Persian, amounting to about forty treatises, are presently being edited at Tehran.

We should also note that his cousin, Afdal al-Din Muhammad Sadr Turkah Isfahan!, was distinguished for his Persian translation of al-Shahrastanl's great work on religion and schools of philosophy *(Kitab al-Milal).* The work was concluded in Isfahan in 843/1439-1440, and completed by a personal study of the same work. The whole project marks a stage in the history of Iranian Islamic philosophy. Unfortunately its author was rewarded for his pains by being executed on the orders of Shah-Rukh, the son of Timur, in 850/1447—an act of malice which brought no joy to Shah-Rukh, who died eighty days later.

Another work, this time by Raj ab al-Bursi, a native of Bursa in Iraq, falls within the second half of the eighth/fourteenth century (exact dates not known). It, too, is of capital importance for this period of Shiite

philosophy. Of the eight or so titles in Rajab al-Bursi's bibliography, the *Mashariq al-anwar (The Orients of the Lights)* is an excellent introduction to Shiite theosophy, for it brings together the most typical of the gnostic sermons attributed to the Imams. The work has been enormously expanded in a Persian paraphrase of several thousand folio pages, a task undertaken by a scholar who came from Sabzavar and settled in Mashhad, al-Hasan al-Khatib al-Qari, and who completed it in 1090/1680 on the orders of Shah Sulayman Safavi (1666-1694). The book concentrates particularly on the theme of the Muhammadan Logos, the eternal prophetic Reality *(Haqiqah muhammadiyah,* which embraces 'all the words in the book of being'. This Logos is the God-reflecting mirror, the unique Light with two dimensions: an exoteric dimension which is the prophetic mission, and an esoteric dimension which is the *walayah,* the divine love invested in the Imam.

However, with regard to the phenomenon of integration, considered from the point of view of its methodical elaboration, it is Sayyid Haydar Amuli's work that stands out as being of decisive importance. It is only recently that it has been possible to reconstruct his biography and part of this work, which is currently being studied and edited: its scope is overwhelming, even though it consists of only thirty-five or so titles (in both Arabic and Persian). The prolegomena alone to his commentary on Ibn al-'Arabi's *Fusus (The Text of Texts, Nass al-nusus,* presently being edited) constitute a remarkable doctrinal Summa taking up the whole of a large volume. Sayyid Haydar, who was born in 720/1320 at Amul, the capital of Tabaristan, south of the Caspian Sea, and who belonged to a very old Shiite family, had a brilliant youth. At the age of thirty, he underwent a profound spiritual crisis; he broke with all worldly ambitions and went to settle in the holy Shiite places in Iraq. The latest work known to be by him dates from 787/1385.

Just as al-Suhrawardi had wished to effect the union of the theosophy of the ancient Persians with Islamic philosophy, Haydar Amuli effected the union of Shiism and Sufi metaphysics. His doctrine of the *Tawhid* is founded on Ibn al-'Arabi's theomonism. There is an exoteric theological *tawhid* (there is no god but 'this' God) which bears witness to the divine Unity: it is this which is invoked by the prophets. There is also an esoteric ontological *tawhid* (only God 'is') which bears witness to the unity of being: it is this which is invoked by the 'Friends

of God'. It is upon the fulfilment of the *hadith* of the Imams that the reciprocity between prophetology and Imamology depends—a relationship of increasing interiority between the prophetic mission *(risalah),* the prophetic state *(nubuwah),* and the *walayah,* the esoteric aspect of prophecy and the Imamic charisma. There is a cycle of prophecy which is henceforth closed, but which is succeeded by the cycle of the *walayah* or spiritual initiation. The Seal of prophecy was the last prophet-messenger, Muhammad. The Seal of the *walayah* is the Muhammadan Imamate, in the dual person of the First Imam, the Seal of the absolute *walayah,* and the Twelfth Imam, the Seal of the post-Muhammadan *walayah.* In spite of his veneration for Ibn al-' Arabi, Haydar Amuli opposes him on this point, criticizing him systematically and with vigour for having made Jesus the Seal of the absolute or universal *walayah.* Let us repeat that the Shiite concept of the *walayah* (Persian *dusti)* is the concept of the charisma of divine friendship. It is not fully identifiable with the concept of *wilayah* which is current in Sufism, and which is usually but inaccurately translated as 'holiness'. It would be a contradiction for a prophet to be the Seal of the universal *walayah.* As we noted above in our general survey, what is at issue is more than a philosophy of history: it is the entire historiosophy of Shiism, a division into periods of hierohistory which was henceforth to prevail, and which can be compared in the West with the historiosophy professed by Joachim of Fiore and the Joachimites.

The perfect cohesion between the theosophy of al-Suhrawardi's *ishraq,* the theosophy of Ibn al-'Arabi and the Shiite tradition was consolidated by Ibn Abi Jumhur (804/1401-1402) and his great work, the *Kitab al-Mujli.* Like Haydar Amuli, Ibn Abi Jumhur explicitly identifies the Twelfth Imam, who is at the present time invisible and whose coming is awaited, with the Paraclete heralded in the Gospel of John. It is now that Shiite theosophy acquires a paracletic and Johannic tone, which explains our recent allusion to Joachimism in Western philosophy.

6. SADR AL-DIN DASHTAKI AND THE SCHOOL OF SHIRAZ

As in the case of the Turkah family of Isfahan, we have to do here with a family dynasty of philosophers. The father, Sadr al-Din Muhammad Dashtaki Shirazi (surnamed Amir Sadr al-Din or Sadr al-Din Kabir 'the Great'; not to be confused with Mulla Sadra who was also

a Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirazi) was an eminent Shiite thinker of the ninth/fifteenth century. He was born in 828/1424-1425, murdered by the Turcomans in 903/1497, and buried at Shiraz. He had a great gift for argument, which severely tested Jalal Dawwani (see p.329). He left about ten works, among them two collections of studies on Nasir al-Din Tusi's *Tajrid and* its commentaries. In his great work (the *Asfar,* see p.342), Mulla Sadra refers to and discusses the positions adopted by Amir Sadr al-Din regarding the being that exists in thought, in 'mental existence' *(wujud dhihni).*

His son, Ghiyath al-Din Mansur Shirazi (d. 940/1533 or 949/1542), called rather pompously by certain of his biographers the 'Eleventh Intelligence' (he had other names as well), wrote about thirty works on philosophy and theology in both Arabic and Persian, concerned mainly with the *kalam,* philosophy and Sufism, but also treating of astronomy and medicine. He spent nearly all his life in Shiraz, where he taught at the Madrasa Mansuriya, founded for him by the Safavid sovereign Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576). The education he received in his youth gives us a very good idea of the intellectual and philosophical activity that went on in Shiraz at the time. His father Sadr al-Din organized discussions in which his son was an enthusiastic participant. The most famous speakers were the philosopher Dawwani, who often received a rough handling, and the Imamite jurist 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-'Ali Karki (surnamed Muhaqqiq-i Karki) who died in 940/1533. The results of these discussions have been recorded in many of his books, for example in those about Nasir Tusi's *Tajrid.* But his most famous work is the commentary on al-Suhrawardi's *Book of the Temples of Light,* which was a response to the commentary by Dawwani. The Work is noteworthy not just for the interest of the polemic, but also because it is evidence both of the extent to which the *ishraq* had penetrated the philosophy of the time, and of the author's Sufi tendencies. Viewed in this light, it heralds the synthesis that was to be forged by Mulla Sadra, who also held Ghiyath al-Din Mansur in high respect. It should be emphasized yet again that these thinkers are well worth study and editing, as are all those who succeeded them.

The grandson of Sadr al-Din Dashtaki and son of Ghiyath al-Din likewise established a certain reputation. He is commonly known as Amir Sadr al-Din II (he died around 961/1553-1554). Like his grandfather, he was interested in mineralogy, and he wrote a book

in Persian on the properties of precious stones *(Jawahir-namah).*

One of Sadr al-Din Dashtaki's most famous pupils was Shams al-Din Muhammad Khafari (935/1528-1529 or 957/1550), who had a great reputation as a philosopher and who appears to have been a great moral influence in Shiraz at that time. Muhaqqiq-i Karki, whom we mentioned above, liked to visit him during his journeys. Khafari left about ten works on philosophy, apart from commentary on the verse of the Throne *(ayat al-Kursi).* We should also mention one of his pupils, Shah Tahir ibn Razi al-Din Isma'ili Husayni, who finally settled in India, where he died in 952/1545-1546 or 956/1549. He left only a few works, among them a study of the metaphysics in Avicenna's *Shifa'.* He was a fervent Twelver Imamite, who effectively contributed to the dissemination of Shiite thought in India.

Finally, although his only link with those already mentioned is the fact that he too belonged to the milieu of Shiraz, we must draw attention to an extraordinary personality, Khwajah Muhammad ibn Mahmud Dihdar (his son was named Mahmud ibn Muhammad, with the result that the catalogues are not clear as to which of them wrote what). Biographically, all we can say is that he lived in 1013/1604-1605, and that he is buried in the Hafidiya at Shiraz. He is the representative *par excellence* of the mystical theosophy of Shiism, in the tradition of Rajab al-Bursi. He also practised divination *(jafr)* and arithmosophy—in short, the sciences which are the equivalent in Islamic gnosis of the techniques of the Cabbalah. He wrote about ten works, all of which are worthy of study. We can mention here only *The Pearl of the Orphan,* and *The Letter 'alif as a Symbol of the Human Form,* which discusses the knowledge of the degrees of the soul up to the degree of the cosmic man or macrocosm. The following is an extract:

> 'Know that the metaphysical reality of man is the metaphysical reality of Muhammad. I shall begin, therefore, with the *tafsir or* two surahs, one of which is the surah 'The Morning': 'Did not your lord find you as an orphan, and did he not give you hospitality?'

This is in fact the surah on which Ismaili gnosis bases the esoteric sense of almsgiving as the gift of gnosis to him who is able to receive it—a concept supported by all the Ismaili 'chivalry'. The implications are many.

7. MIR DAMAD AND THE SCHOOL OF ISFAHAN

With the restoration of the Iranian empire and the reign of Shah 'Abbas I (1587-1629), Isfahan became the capital of the Islamic arts and sciences, and the centre of spiritual culture in Iran. We have already suggested that the thinkers who began to proliferate in Iran at that time should be grouped under the heading of 'School of Isfahan'. Of course, as we shall see below, there were many different orientations within this school. On the other hand, it was not a question of spontaneous generation, as the foundations had already been laid by the thinkers named above. Nevertheless, once Shiism had definitely come out of hiding, vast works began to make their appearance (such as those by Mulla Sadra, Qadi Sa'id Qummi and others), in which the *hadith* of the Imams bore fruit in philosophical meditation. This does not mean that the philosophers were henceforth free of trouble.

The great themes in question were *par excellence* the problem of time, of the event, the reality of the imaginal world {*'alam al-mithal, barzakh)* and, correspondingly, a new gnosiology. In the writings of Mulla Sadra, this gnosiology amounted to a revolution in the metaphysics of being, a validation of the active Imagination, a concept of intrasubstantial movement which takes into account metamorphoses and palingeneses, a historiosophy based on the twofold 'dimension' of the Muhammadan Logos, the Muhammadan metaphysical light of Reality (the exoteric aspect of prophecy, and the esoteric aspect of Imamology)—a grandiose structure, closer to the great philosophical 'systems' of the West at the beginning of the nineteenth century than to the ideas of Ibn Khaldun.

The Iranian biographical-bibliographical catalogues too often make a summary distinction between Peripatetics *(mashsha'un)* and Platonists *(ishraqiyun).* First and foremost, the term 'Peripatetics' does not have quite the same meaning for our philosophers as it does for us, if only because of the *Theology* attributed to Aristotle, a work greatly popular among them. On the other hand—and for the same reason—it is almost the exception to find a pure Peripatetic among them, a philosopher who is not more or less steeped in neo-Platonism and who is not *eo ipso,* in one way or another, almost an *ishraqi.* A first and famous example is Mir Damad (Muhammad Baqir Astarabadi, who died in 1040/1631-1632), the 'teacher of thinking' to several generations of Shiite philosophers, and the greatest name of the School of

Isfahan. He is often classed among the *mashsha'un;* and while this is not inaccurate, this 'Peripatetic' has left ecstatic confessions of poignant beauty, with clear echoes of al-Suhrawardi, and he chose the pseudonym *Ishraq.* The college where he taught, the Madrasa Sadr, with its big gardens, still functions in Isfahan.

Mir Damad left around forty works in both Arabic and Persian, noted for their abstruseness and almost entirely unedited, as though somewhat eclipsed by those of his brilliant pupil Mulla Sadra. We should mention his *Book of the Burning Coals (Qabasat),* a summa of his researches on Avicenna, written in Arabic; his *Book of the Burning Brands (Jadhawat,* written in Persian; these fanciful titles have no bearing whatever on the seriousness of the text), in which, perhaps, he gives freer rein to his personal vision. One of the problems that preoccupied him was that of finding a solution to the dilemma of cosmology: a world *ab aeterno,* or a world which came into existence in time (as the *mutakallimun* professed) before there was any time? Between the eternally existing and the event which came into existence in time, he sought a solution in an eternal coming-to-be *(huduth dahri),* an eternally new event—a concept laden with implications for the events of hierohistory, and which entailed the further concept of an 'imaginary time' which was to inspire heated polemics.

Among Mir Damad's many pupils, mention can only be made here—apart from Mulla Sadra Shirazi; (see p.342)—of a few of the most famous. First among these is Sayyid Ahmad ibn Zaynal-'Abidin al-'Alawi (died between 1054/1644 and 1060/1650), a young cousin of his who became his pupil and then his son-in-law. His writings on philosophy are important and comprise about ten works. Besides the commentaries on his teacher's difficult treatises, there is a vast *opus* on Avicenna's *Shifa'* entitled *The Key to the Shifa',* in which the author makes express reference to Avicenna's 'Oriental philosophy'; a long introduction to a philosophical and theosophical *tafsir* of the Quran *(Lata'if-i ghaybi in* Persian); and others.

Another pupil wrote a monumental commentary of one thousand two hundred folio pages on *The Book of the Burning Coals* (*Qabasat),* an entire life's work. Unfortunately, all we know to date of this pupil is his name, Muhammad ibn 'Ali-Rida ibn al-Aqajani, and the date when he completed his work (1071 /1661). As we are acquainted with the manuscript, we take this opportunity to express our interest and

our hope that it will find an editor. What presents a considerable difficulty is that his work appears to have been duplicated by another of Mir Damad's pupils, whose name is lost to us because the manuscript is mutilated at the start, though its size is the same. Such commentaries are true explorations, in which the writers give free rein to their personal philosophical inspiration.

Another pupil of Mir Damad, Qutb al-Din Muhammad Ashkivari (also known as Sharif-i Lahiji, who died after 1075/1664-1665) wrote a vast rhapsody in Arabic and Persian, which divides the traditions, quotations and commentaries concerning the ancient sages prior to Islam, the philosophers and spiritual adepts of Sunni Islam, and finally the Imams and the great figures among the Shiite thinkers and adepts, into three great cycles. The chapter on Zoroaster contains a remarkable comparison of the Twelfth Imam of the Shiites with the *Saoshyant* or eschatological Saviour of the Zoroastrians. He also wrote a treatise on the *mundus imaginalis* and a commentary on the Quran which employs a Shiite symbolic hermeneutic *(ta'wil).*

Lastly, we should mention Mulla Shamsa Gilani, whose work, amounting to about fifteen treatises hitherto confined to libraries, seems to us of increasing importance as its reconstruction proceeds. He was an Iranian who came from the shores of the Caspian Sea, and for many years he followed the teaching of Mir Damad, whose doctrines he expanded in his books. He was a great traveller {he had travelled over almost all of Iran, as well as in Iraq, Syria and Hijaz). He was a younger co-disciple of Mulla Sadra, but unlike him he remained faithful to the metaphysics of essence. Although they criticized each other in their respective books, they conducted a friendly correspondence with each other. Worth mentioning here are his *Treatise on the Ways of Certitude,* his *Treatise on the Manifestation of Perfection to the Companions of Truth,* and his *Treatise on the Coming-to-be of the World,* in which he supports the thesis of Mir Damad that we summarized above.

8. MIR FINDIRISKI AND HIS PUPILS

Mir Abu al Qasim Findiriski {d. 1050/1640-1641), who taught philosophical and theological sciences to several generations of students at Isfahan, was a powerful personality who remains shrouded in a certain mystery. Considering the great repute in which he was held, the work

he left is surprisingly meagre. He was involved in the project of translating Sanskrit texts into Persian, in which the prince Dara Shikuh played a major role. His main work is a highly original treatise in Persian on human actions and activity: he classes these according to a hierarchy which culminates in philosophers and prophets, who are brought together in a chapter on 'prophetic philosophy'. This chapter leads into hermeneutics and esotericism, and the treatise ends with a systematization of the degrees of the ladder of being, where it is not surprising to find the name and the shadow of Ahriman appearing in the work of this Iranian philosopher. He is classed as a 'Peripatetic', and indeed he wrote a treatise on the movement which sets out to be anti-Platonic. But this contemporary of Michael Maier also wrote a treatise on alchemy, which appears to contain his teaching on esotericism.

Mulla Sadra is frequently said to have been a member of his audience and one of his pupils, but nothing could be more uncertain than this, as Mulla Sadra never says a word about it. On the other hand, it is certain that Rajab 'Ali Tabrizi {see p.345} attended the lessons that he gave. Among the other students whom he instructed in philosophy, mention should be made of Husayn Khwansari (born in 1076/1607-1608 and died at Isfahan in 1098/1686-1687), a man whose ability in mathematics and astronomy, philosophy and the religious sciences (law, the *tafsir*, the *kalam,* the *hadith)* earned him the nickname of 'professor of all and everything'. He wrote around fifteen works, chief among which is his treatise on the captive will and the free will, studies on Avicenna's *Shifa'* and *Isharat,* on Nasfr al-Din Tusi's *Tajrid,* on 'Ali al-Qushji's treatise on astronomy, and a commentary on the lessons of the Protomartyr *(Shahid-i awwal,* see p. 322).

Husayn Khwansari in his turn had many pupils, including his two sons Sayyid Jamal al-Din Khwansari (d. 1121/1709 or 1125/1713), and Sayyid Razi Khwansari; Mulla Masiha Pasa'i Shirazi (d.1130/1717-1718 or 1115/1703-1704), who is known principally for two works, one a treatise on Necessary Being, and one a paraphrase in Persian of al-Shaykhal-Mufid's *Irshad,* Muhammad Baqir Sabzavari, nicknamed Muhaqqiq Sabzavari (d. 1098/1686-1687), who wrote studies on Avicenna's *Shifa'* and *Isharat,* on al-Shaykh al-Mufid's *Irshad,* and a long work on culture in general, *The Garden of Lights,*

which he dedicated to Shah Sulayman; Mirza Rafi'a Na'ini (d. 1080/1669-1670 or 1082/1671-1672), who wrote some ten treatises, mainly works of philosophical exploration into the great Shiite writings: one on al-Kulayni's *Kafi*, which is accompanied by a personal study of it written in Persian, *al-Shajarat al-ilahlyah dar Usul-i Kafi*, another on Muftid's *Irshad,* a third on the 'psalter' of the Fourth Imam, and a fourth on Nasir al-Din Tusi's commentary on the *Isharat.*

9. MULLA SADRA SHIRAZI AND HIS PUPILS

We have now reached the high point of the Iranian Islamic philosophy of these last centuries. Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirazi, commonly known as Mulla Sadra, was born in 979/1571-1572 and died in 1050/1640-1641. He succeeded in creating a powerful personal synthesis of the different currents of which we have been speaking. Down to our own time his thought has left a personal stamp on all Iranian philosophy or, more broadly speaking, on Shiite consciousness at the level of its philosophical expression. He left a monumental body of work of more than forty-five titles, several of which are folio. The commentary that he wrote in the margins of Avicenna's *Shifa'* heralds its reformation, while his commentary on al-Suhrawardi's *Oriental Theosophy* provides the *ishraq* with a well-tried basis. His masterpiece, *The Four Journeys of the Spirit (al-Asfaral-arba'ah,* a thousand folio pages in length) is a Summa which ever since it was written has nourished most of the thinkers of Iran. It is impossible to make a detailed list of the titles of his other works. We must, however, mention his great commentary, unfortunately never completed, on the 'Sources' (*Usul)* of al-Kulayni's *Kafi*, one of the fundamental books of Shiism. In it the most illustrious of the 'Platonists of Persia' constructs a monument of 'prophetic philosophy' which consolidates an alliance between Shiism and Platonism that can be traced back to the 'symbol of faith' of Shaykh-i Saduq Ibn Babuyah. We should also mention the commentaries on several surahs of the Quran—another monumental achievement in which Mulla Sadra shows himself to be the witness *par excellence* who makes it possible for us to understand how philosophy was able to maintain and renew its vigour in Shiite Islam while it was silent in the rest of the *Dar al-Islam.*

Mulla Sadra effected an entire revolution in the metaphysics of being by substituting a metaphysics of existence for the traditional meta-

physics of essences, and giving priority *ab initio* to existence over quiddity. His thesis that there are no immutable essences, but that each essence is determined and variable according to the degree of intensity of its act of existence, invokes another thesis, namely that of the intrasubstantial or transsubstantial movement that introduces movement into the category of substance. Mulla Sadra is the philosopher of metamorphoses, of transubstantiations. His anthropology is in full agreement with that postulated by Shiite eschatology, expressed in the expectation of the coming of the Twelfth Imam as the coming of the Perfect Man. This anthropology is itself bound up with a grandiose cosmogony and psychogony: the fall of the Soul into the abyss of abysses, its slow ascent from level to level up to the human form, which is the point where it emerges onto the threshold of the *malakut* (the trans-physical spiritual world), the extension of anthropology into a physics and metaphysics of the resurrection. The concept of matter is neither that of materialism nor of spiritualism. Matter passes through infinite states of being: there is subtle matter, spiritual matter *(maddah ruhaniyah),* even divine matter. On this point Sadra is in profound accord with the Cambridge Platonists as well as with F.C. Oetinger (*Geistleiblichkeit).*

For all beings and all objects there is a threefold mode of existence: that on the level of the sensible world, that on the level of the *mundus imaginalis* (*'alam al-mithal),* and that on the level of the world of the pure Intelligences. Al-Suhrawardi had established the ontology of the *mundus imaginalis.* Sadra was conscious of consummating the doctrine of the *Shaykh al-Ishraq by* taking one indispensable step: he predicated the immateriality of the active Imagination. This faculty is no longer dependent on the physical organism to the extent of perishing along with it, but is a purely spiritual faculty; in a sense, it is the subtle envelope of the soul. Hence Sadra concedes the 'creativity' *{khallaqiyah)* of the soul, as the creator of its own paradise or hell. In fact, all the levels of the modes of being and perception are governed by the same law of unity, which at the level of the intelligible world is the unity of intellection, of the intelligizing subject, and of the Form intelligized—the same unity as that of love, lover and beloved. Within this perspective we can perceive what Sadra meant by the unitive union of the human soul, in the supreme awareness of its acts of knowledge, with the active Intelligence which is the Holy Spirit. It is never a question

of an arithmetical unity, but of an intelligible unity permitting the reciprocity which allows us to understand that, in the soul which it metamorphoses, the Form—or Idea—intelligized by the active Intelligence is a Form which intelligizes itself, and that as a result the active Intelligence or Holy Spirit intelligizes itself in the soul's act of intellection. Reciprocally, the soul, as a Form intelligizing itself, intelligizes itself as a Form intelligized by the active Intelligence. Mulla Sadra is an authentic representative of 'speculative' philosophy in the sense described in our general survey, and this philosophy leads on to a phenomenology of the Holy Spirit.

It is scarcely surprising, given the density of his work, that it should have been the subject in our time of a whole host of what we would call studies and explorations, and what our authors would call glosses and commentaries. Mulla Sadra had a great many pupils, of whom we can only name the three most immediate followers. The first two were not only his pupils but also his sons-in-law.

The closest to him was certainly Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani (d. 1091/1680), a personality who was eminently representative of the type of Shiite philosopher and theosopher produced by the teaching of Mulla Sadra. He himself was a teacher at Isfahan at the Madrasa 'Abd Allah Shushtari, which still functions today and where it is still possible to visit the rooms in which he lived. He was a prolific writer in both Arabic and Persian, with a bibliography of more than a hundred and twenty titles. We cannot even give an idea here of their variety, for they cover the entire field of study covered by the curriculum. We may mention that he entirely rewrote, from the Shiite point of view, the Ih*ya' al- 'ulum al-din* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences),* the great work by al-Ghazali for which he possessed an admiration that did not in the least detract from his admiration for Ibn al-' Arabi. Another of his great works, *'Ayn al-yaqin, The Certitude of the Eye-witness,* is a personal synthesis which complements his great commentary on the Quran.

Mulla Muhsin's brother-in-law, Mulla 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji (died at Qumm in 1072/1661-1662) seems to have been an entirely different personality. For a long time he attended the lessons of his father-in-law Mulla Sadra, but it appears that Sadra's theses as a whole did not satisfy his personal philosophy. In fact he seems to waver sometimes between two extremes, as if rent by an inner struggle, or intimidated by the

outer world and his social surroundings. In any case, it would be far too perfunctory to class him purely and simply as a 'Peripatetic', as some classifications do. As is evident from his book *Gawhar-i murad {The Substance of one's Intentions),* there is no doubt that he had personal experience of Sufism. He left about a dozen works. His commentary on Nasir Tusi's *Tajrid* (edited in two folio volumes) is regarded as the best in the field. His annotations on physics in Tusi's commentary on Avicenna's *Isharat* are still unedited, although the position he there adopts is highly original. One of his sons, Mirza Hasan Lahiji (d. 1121/1709-1710) wrote a dozen works which are particularly concerned with the philosophy of the Shiite Imamate.

Another immediate pupil of Mulla Sadra, Husayn Tunakabuni, who died in 1104/1692-1693 between Mecca and Medina, on his return from a pilgrimage, was himself an exemplary *ishraqi* philosopher and a faithful interpreter of Mulla Sadra. He wrote several treatises on the coming-to-be of the world, on the transcendent unity of being, and so on, as well as studies on Avicenna's *Shifa',* Nasir Tusi's *Tajrid and* the text-book by Khafari referred to above.

10. RAJAB 'Ali TABRIZI AND HIS PUPILS

Rajab 'Ali Tabrizi, who died in 1080/1669-1670, was, as his name suggests, a native of Tabriz, and a contemporary of Shah 'Abbas II (1642-1666), who honoured him with several visits. In the person of Rajab 'Ali we enter a philosophical climate different from that of Mulla Sadra, and there is a sense in which it is stimulating to see him take the opposite view to Sadra's theses (the negation of 'existential' metaphysics, of transubstantial movement, of mental existence as existence in its own right, etc.).

Rajab 'Ali is distinguished *abinitio* by a metaphysics of being which affirms not the analogy, but the radical uncertainty of the concept of being when it is ascribed to Necessary Being and non-necessary beings. There cannot therefore be any question of common participation in the concept; yet there is on the other hand pure homonymy in the use of the term, because our concept of being actually embraces only created being, creatural being. The principle and source of being always transcends being, and can be discerned only from afar, *per viam negativam (tanzih),* that is to say through apophatic theology. There can thus be no question of theomonism, of a transcendent unity of

being embracing both the uncreated and the created. Rajab 'Ali is perfectly aware that he will be accused of being the first person ever to profess such a metaphysics of being. His reply is that terrible calumnies have been perpetrated in order to obliterate this tradition. He knows that the tradition of the holy Imams is on his side, but he has no doubt that on this point he rejoins the path of Ismaili gnosis and that he will himself concur with the theosophy of the Shaykhi school {see p.352). This does not prevent him from possessing a doctrine of 'presential knowledge' which is very close to that of al-Suhrawardi.

His pupils were many. The most famous of them was Qadi Sa'id Qummi (see below), apart from whom the most outstanding was Muhammad Rafi' Pir-Zadah (dates uncertain) who was his teacher's *famulus* and secretary. When Rajab 'Ali grew old, it was painful for him to write, and on his instructions his disciple wrote a long work' entitled *al-Ma'arif al-ilahiyah (The Great Themes of Metaphysics),* which both preserves and continues the master's teaching. Another disciple was 'Abbas Mawlawi (d. after 1101/1689-1690), who left two great Summas recapitulating Shiite philosophy, dedicated to Shah Sulayman {1666-1694). They were entitled *al-Anwar al-sulaymaniyah* {*The Book of Lights dedicated to Sulayman,* completed in 1101 /1689-1690), and *al-Fawa'id al-usuliyah (The Fundamental Teachings,* completed in 1084/1673-1674). Two of his other, less famous pupils were Mulla Muhammad Tunakabuni and Mir Qawam Razi.

11. QADI SA'ID QUMMI

The importance of this thinker and spiritual man is so great that he requires a section to himself, restricted though we are to a few lines. Qadi Sa'id was born at Qumm in 1043/1633, spent most of his life there as a teacher, and died there in 1103/1691-1692. In Isfahan he was the pupil of Rajab 'Ali Tabrizi, but he was also a pupil of Muhsin Fayd and 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji (with whom he studied al-Suhrawardi's *Oriental Theosophy).* In this way, his person and his thought were moulded by two traditions.

He is eminently representative of the mystical theosophy of Twelver Shiism. He was Shiite *ishraqi,* whose works should all have been edited long ago. It is difficult to number them, for in the author's mind his treatises were to form a number of independent volumes, and these

volumes were never completed. Thus, after the Persian treatise *Kalid-i bihisht (The Key of Paradise),* where he takes up the theory of the equivocalness of being professed by his teacher Rajab 'Ali, he started to write an extremely complex *Commentary on Forty Hadith,* but he does not get beyond the twenty-eighth. This is followed by a *Book of Forty Treatises,* of which only ten or possibly eleven were written. He left a notebook of annotations on the *Theology* attributed to Aristotle, a work which our philosophers have always continued to read. Finally, there is his *magnum opus.* In the same way that Mulla Sadra constructed a veritable Summa of Shiite theosophical metaphysics in commentating al-Kulayni's *Kafi,* Qadi Sa'id constructed his own Summa in commentating the *Tawhid* by Shaykh-i Saduq Ibn Babuyan. It too was never completed, but the three volumes that Qadi Sa'id managed to write are a monumental achievement.

Saduq's works bring together a vast number of the traditions of the Imams, fundamental both for apophatic theology and for the Imamology to which it gives rise. These traditions are sometimes in the form of autonomous treatises which develop within the commentary. The same is true of Qadi Sa'id's study of the esoteric meaning of the five basic religious prescriptions. In the cubic structure of the Temple of the Ka'bah he perceives the structure of the Imamate of the Twelve Imams. The Temple of stone is transfigured into the spiritual Temple of the Imamate, and becomes the secret itself of human life, the *qiblah* or axis of orientation of a pilgrimage which is identified with the stages of life. Once again, philosophy becomes a 'narrative philosophy', just as Schelling was to wish that it should be. The *hadith* of the 'Twelve Veils of Light' associates Imamology with cosmogony, as well as with the theosophy of history and metahistory, in its symbolic description of the peregrinations of the Muhammadan Light in the Pleroma, and then of its 'descents' from world to world through seventy thousand Veils until it reaches this world. The twelve Veils of light are the twelve Imams and their twelve respective universes, 'figured' as twelve millennia. These twelve universes are the archetype of the cycle of the *walayah* which is their inverted image, because it reinvolutes through a process of return and reascent. This is as it were a revival of the ancient Graeco-Iranian theologies of the Aeon. Qadi Sa'id develops a concept of time which is allied to the ontology of the *mundus imaginalis* and of the subtle body. Each being has a *quantum (miqdar)*

of its own time, a personal time, which behaves like a piece of wax when it is compressed or else stretched. The *quantum* is constant, but there is a time which is compact and dense, which is the time of the sensible world; a subtle time, which is the time of the 'imaginal world'; and a supra-subtle time, which is the time of the world of pure Intelligences. The dimensions of contemporaneity increase in relation to the 'subtlety' of the mode of existence: the *quantum* of time which is given to a spiritual individual can thus encompass the immensity of being, and hold both past and future in the present. From this point of view, the commentary on the *hadith* or recital of the 'White Cloud' is fascinating.

12. FROM THE SCHOOL OF ISFAHAN TO THE SCHOOL OF TEHRAN

We come now to a period which was difficult for the philosophers, and which continues to be difficult for those of their colleagues wishing to record their history, such was the chaos then reigning and so scattered were the manuscripts. (They have reappeared only as catalogues have been published.) The situation is dominated by the catastrophe which put an end to Safavid Isfahan and to the reign of Sultan Husayn: the capture of the city by the Afghans after a siege of unspeakable cruelty {1135/21st October 1722), of which we are poignantly reminded by a page of the philosopher Isma'il Khwaju'i. The Afghan domination lasted only eight or nine years, and the Safavid dynasty survived, nominally, in Tahmasp II and 'Abbas III, until 1736. Then came the reign of Nadir Shah and, at Shiraz, that of the Zand dynasty. In short, there was a long period of disturbance and instability until the coming of the Qajar dynasty. {The reign of Agha Muhammad Khan actually began in 1779, but he was not crowned until 1796.) With the second Qajar sovereign Fath 'Ali-Shah (1797-1834) the centre of intellectual and cultural life in Iran was definitively moved from Isfahan to Tehran. From the point of view of the philosopher, this period is characterized by the growing influence of the thought of Mulla Sadra, who had not been fully understood or well received by his contemporaries. For the sake of clarity, we will divide the philosophers provisionally into four groups.

Firstly, there is the group belonging to the period of the catastrophe, starting with Mirza Muhammad Sadiq Ardistani, who died in 1134/1721-1722, the year of the siege of Isfahan. This philosopher

and highly spiritual man suffered great hardship, for he had brought on himself the wrath of Shah Sultan Husayn. The most important of his two principal works is the *Hikmah sadiqiya* {the author's personal philosopy), which is concerned with the soul and its supra-sensible faculties, and in which, following Mulla Sadra, he takes a clear stand against Avicenna and the Avicennans in general, in favour of the immateriality of the active Imagination *(tajarrud-i khayal).* But he appears to have found it more difficult to explain the attachment of the universal Soul to the body. This attachment consists of an epiphany {*tajalli, zuhur),* and each individual thinking soul is aray of the radiance of the universal Soul. But in what does this epiphany essentially consist—this 'descent' which holds the universal Soul suspended *(tajalli; cf.* Quran 53:8)? The book was actually written by a pupil of Sadiq Ardistani, Mulla Hamzah (Mani (d. 1134/1721-1722, also during the siege of Isfahan), in accordance with the master's teaching, while another pupil, Muhammad 'Ali ibn Muhammad Rida, wrote a long introduction to it.

Contemporary with Sadiq Ardistani was 'Inayat Allah Gilani, who expounded the works of Avicenna. Fadi Hindi Isfahani (d. 1135/1722-1723) left around fifteen works. Mirza Muhammad-Taqi Almasi (d. 1159/1746) was the grandson of Muhammad-Taqi Majlisi {d. 1070/1659-1660), the father of Muhammad-Baqir Majlisi (d. 1111/1699-1700), who wrote the great Shiite encyclopaedia *Bihar al-anwar,* as well as some works of history and edification which have been widely read in Iran down to our day. Almasi left, among other things, a book on the 'Great Occultation of the Twelfth Imam'. Qutb al-Din Muhammad Nayrizi Shirazi (d. 1173/1759-1760) was a true *ishraqi:* 'The logic of the Peripatetics is not immune from error; it is not sufficient to itself; it is the source of delusion. For my part, I take the logic of the Gnostics to be in truth the logic of metaphysics.' Isma'il Khwaju'i (d. in Isfahan in 1171/1757-1758 or 1173/1759-1760), who suffered the horrors of the siege, wrote around one hundred and fifty treatises on the manifold questions of philosophy, the various sciences and the great themes of Shiism (including a treatise on the Imamate). He is principally known for his spirited treatise against the concept of 'imaginary time' *(zaman mawhum,* not 'imaginal'), which he wrote in refutation of Jamal al-Din Khwansari (see p.341), and which involves the theory of Mir Damad.

Secondly, we come to Agha Muhammad Bidabadi {1198/ 1783-1784) and his pupils. Shaykh Bidabadi had himself been a pupil of Mirza Muhammad-Taqi Almasi and Isma'il Khwaju'i. He expounded the works of Mulla Sadra at Isfahan—the text of his lessons on the *Asfar* has been preserved. Like Mir Findiriski, he wrote a treatise on alchemy which was fully commentated in 1209/1794-1795 by a doctor of Isfahan, Mirza Muhammad Rida ibn Rajab 'Ali. He had a great many followers, including Mulla Mihrab Gilani (1217/1802-1803); Abu al-Qasim Khatunabadi (1203/1788-1789), who wrote mainly on Shiite themes (e.g. al-Kulayni's *Kafi);* and Mahdi Naraqi (1209/ 1794-1795), who was also the pupil of Isma'il Khwaju'i. Mahdi Naraqi was a powerful personality and a tireless man of action; he was equally competent in the fields of philosophy, morals, mathematics and the juridical sciences (he was a strong supporter of the *usuliyun* versus the *akhbariyun).* He left about a dozen works, all of which bear the stamp of his personality—even those which are concerned with the classic questions of being and essence. His great treatise on morals *(Jami 'al-sa 'adat)* is still read today. We must also mention Mirza Ahmad Ardakani Shirazi, who wrote an important commentary on Mulla Sadra's *Kitab al-masha'ir,* although all we know about him is the fact that he was working in Shiraz in 1225/1810.

Thirdly, we have Mulla 'Ali ibn Jamshid Nuri (1246/1830-1831) and his pupils. Mulla 'Ali Nun was one of the most famous students of Muhammad Bidabadi and one of the most respected professors of his time. He studied at Mazandaran and Qazvin before settling in Isfahan. We are indebted to him for some important lectures on several works by Mulla Sadra, on the *Fawa'id* (teachings) of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i (see below), as well as for a long commentary on the *Tawhid* surah and a reply to the polemic of a Christian missionary. He had a whole host of pupils, although we can mention only a few names here. There was Mulla Isma'il Isfahani (1277/1860-1861), who himself left some important lectures on Mulla Sadra; Mulla Agha-yi Qazvini, a pupil of both Mulla 'Ali Nun and Mulla Isma'il Isfahani; Muhammad Ja'far Langarudi, who wrote a very extensive commentary On the *Masha'ir* and the *Hikmat 'arshiyah (The Theosophy of the Throne)* by Mulla Sadra, and whose commentary on Nasir al-Din Tusi's *Tajrid* dates from 1255/1839-1840. The most eminent followers of Mulla 'Ali Nuri, 'Abd-Allah Zunuzi and Hadi Sabzavari, will be discussed below.

Fourthly, we come to the school of Tehran. During the reign of Fath 'Ali Qajar (1797-1834), the Madrasa Khan Marvi was founded at Tehran. Mulla 'Ali Nuri was invited to teach there, but he preferred to delegate the task to one of his most brilliant pupils, Mulla 'Abd-Allah Zunuzi (1257/1841-1842). This invitation was, in a way, the signal for the transferring of the centre of Islamic sciences from Isfahan to Tehran. This is evidenced by several great philosophical figures. First and foremost is 'Abd-Allah Zunuzi, a native of Zunuz near Tabriz, who studied at Karbala', then at Qum, then at Isfahan, where he studied philosophy under Mulla 'Ali Nurl. He wrote several long works, all of them in the spirit of al-Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra; it is to be hoped that they will shortly be edited. He had two sons, one of whom (Husayn Zunuzi) was expert in mathematics and astronomy. The other, Agha 'Ali Zunuzi (known as *Mudanis,* meaning the 'professor' *par excellence,* and who died in 1307/1889-1890), had a reputation equal to his father's as a philosopher. He left several works, also in the tradition of Mulla Sadra, whom he taught and commentated. His most notable work is a work in Persian *(Badayi'al-hikam),* in which he replies to seven obscure questions put to him by the prince Imad al-Dawlah Badi 'al-Mulk Mirza, who was himself a translator of Mulla Sadra into Persian. Muhammad Rida Qumshahi {1306/1888-1889) was a metaphysician and an ardent disciple of Mulla Sadra, as well as a most noble moral person. In Isfahan he had been the pupil of Mulla 'Ali Nuri and of Muhammad Ja'far Langarudi, and then he established himself at Tehran where he taught at the Madrasa Sadr, chiefly on Mulla Sadra's *Asfar* and Ibn al-'Arabi's *Fusus.* Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Jalvah (1315/1896), also a well-known professor in the same tradition, taught for forty years in Tehran, at the Madrasa Dar al-Shifa'. He left a treatise on intrasubstantial motion, and a large number of lectures on Sadra's *Asfar,* Avicenna's *Shifa',* al-Abhari's *Hidayah,* and so on.

It is impossible to mention even the names of the stud ents who studied under these masters. Down the generations, even though we cannot allude to their writings, we encounter the names of Mirza Tahir Tunakabuni, Mirza Mahdi Ashtiyani, Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Shahabadl, Sayyid Husayn Bakublhi. This last was a professor at Najaf, and the teacher of two eminent contemporary traditional philosophers: Sayyid Kazim 'Assar, professor at the Faculty of Theology at Tehran,

and Shaykh 'Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, professor at the theological university of Qum, to whom we are indebted—among other things—for a new edition of Mulla Sadra's *Asfar and* a philosophical commentary on the Quran.

13. **SHAYKH AHMAD** AHSA'I AND THE SHAYKHI SCHOOL OF KIRMAN

The Shaykhi school was contemporary with the philosophers we have been speaking about, but occupies a place which is completely its own. As for the designations 'shaykhism' and 'shaykhis', it was not the school itself which chose them in order to distinguish itself; they were chosen by 'others', who gave it these names in order to define its students as disciples of the 'shaykh'—that is, of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i. Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i had never even had the intention of founding a school, and did not mean to differ from the 'others' save in his strict adherence to the integral theosophical teachings of the Imams of Twelver Shiism. He had deepened this teaching through a life of personal meditation, and possessed evidence of it in his inner experiences, in which he was privileged to speak in vision to the Imams whom he regarded as his only teachers. This integral Imamism confronted a persistent failure of understanding, the history of which is not particularly edifying. It should nevertheless be said that it had the scope of a metaphysical reformation, possessing quite different aims from those envisaged by the 'reformist' movements which sprang up elsewhere in the Islamic world.

Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i was a man of noble spirituality, who manifested all the features of a 'man of God'—something that has never been contested. He was born in 1166/1753 at al-Ahsa', in the territory of Bahrayn. He appears to have been of pure Arab descent, coming originally from the part of Arabia which is on the coast of the Persian Gulf (where the Qarmats in the tenth century had founded a little ideal State, visited by Nasir-i Khusraw). But he spent about fifteen years in Iran, and were it not for the response and the enthusiasm aroused there by his person and teaching, 'Shaykhism' would doubtless not exist. His first steps along the spiritual way are known to us from his autobiography. The Shaykhi tradition has no teacher of whom he might have claimed to be a disciple. It is as though he had no teacher other than the *ustadh-i ghaybi*—that inner teacher whom other spiritual men have also claimed as their own, but who in his case expressly designates

in turn one of the 'Fourteen Immaculate Ones'. Nevertheless, we know the names of a few teachers whose lectures he attended. After an astonishingly full life, in which he inspired fervent devotion in his followers—and also, unfortunately, the all too human jealousy of some of his colleagues—he died a few steps away from Medina in 1241/1826: his intention had been to settle in Mecca with his family. His work is considerable, and consists of over a hundred and thirty-two titles—many more, in fact, for certain works are collections of several treatises. Almost everything he wrote has been published in lithographic editions.

The successors of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i have all been exceptional thinkers and spiritual men, although this by no means guaranteed them a peaceful existence. Firstly, there was the figure who was truly his spiritual son, Sayyid Kazim Rashti, born at Rasht, south-west of the Caspian Sea, 1212/1798, and dying at Baghdad in 1259/1843. Sayyid Kazim was gifted with a rare aptitude for profound metaphysical speculation, and he too wrote a considerable number of works. Some of these unfortunately disappeared, together with a number of autograph manuscripts of Shaykh Ahmad, when his home in Karbala' was plundered, as happened on two occasions. With Shaykh Ahmad's second successor, the school established its centre at Kirman in south-eastern Iran, where it has a madrasa of theology, a college and a printing works. Shaykh Muhammad Karim-Khan Kirmani, who was born at Kirman in 1225/1809 and who died in 1288/1870, belonged through his father, Ibrahim-Khan, to the imperial ruling family. He studied under Sayyid Kazim at Karbala', and has left an impressive number of works (more than two hundred and seventy-eight titles) covering the whole field of Islamic and philosophical sciences, including alchemy, medicine, optics and music. His son, Shaykh Muhammad-Khan Kirmani (1263/1846-1324/1906), who succeeded him, also wrote an enormous number of works. Father and son were in intimate collaboration, both intellectual and spiritual, and this was also the case between Muhammad-Khan and his younger brother, Shaykh Zaynal-'Abidln Khan Kirmani (1276/1859-1360/1942), who succeeded him and whose equally considerable writings are in the main unedited. Finally, the fifth successor, Shaykh Abu al-Qasim Ibrahimi, known as 'Sarkar Agha' (1314/1896-1389/1969), was also the author of important works in which he had to confront the most burning

questions. He was succeeded by his son 'Abd al-Rida Khan Ibrahimi, who has already published a great deal. Altogether the works of these masters, which are preserved in Kirman, amount to a thousand titles, of which barely half have been published.

Since the seventeenth century especially, Shiite thinkers have adopted two strongly contrasting stands. On the one hand there are the *usulis*, or *usuliyun*, who could broadly be defined as 'critical theologians', and on the other hand there are the *akhbaris* or *akhbariyun*, who appear to be the 'fundamentalist' theologians. The former approach the vast body of Shiite tradition with a critique based on extrinsic criteria which do not conduce to any certainty, and which are rejected by the *akhbariyun*, who accept the *corpus in* its integrality. Their head was Muhammad Amin Astarabadi {1033/1623-1624). The 'fundamentalists' are considered to be simple people, for mystical theosophy is no part of their approach. This is not to say that there have not been some highly distinguished metaphysicians among them, such as Muhsin Fayd and Qadi Sa'id Qummi (see above pp.344, 346). The point is that although the two schools appear to be in opposition mainly on questions of canon law, in fact the hermeneutical premisses of the *akhbans* have repercussions with respect to the sources of traditional metaphysics. The *akhbaris* have recourse neither to the authority of the *mujtahids*—the accepted researchers—nor to the human authority of the transmitters of tradition, but to the content itself of the *hadith*, in deciding whether or not the latter come from the Imams. To the degree that, given these premisses, Akhbarism calls for a greater metaphysical and theosophical depth, we can understand and define the fundamental position of the Shaykhi school as intermediary, but certainly closer to that of the *akhbaris.*

Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i and his successors have strictly adhered to the consequences of Shiite apophatic theology. The idea of 'absolute' being, as it is commonly employed by philosophers, is not even an initial idea for them, for the passive participle 'absolute' presupposes an *absolvens*, an 'absolution' of being, liberating being by putting it not in the infinitive *{esse)*, nor in the substantival participle *{ens)*, but in the imperative *(esto)*. Cosmogony is envisaged in the form of a transcendent Adamology. The pre-eternal fundamental Will, at once both subject and object, both matter, form and finality of its autocreative act, is seen as a metaphysical, primordial Adam *{Adam al-akbar*, the Greater Adam, *Homo maximus);* and the metaphysical Eve who is the equal of this Adam is the liberation of being, of being absolved from non-being, from the Great Abyss. From this zenith represented by the *Adam maximus*, 'our father' Adam, born with neither father nor mother, is the nadir in the world of our earthly history—in fact he is the third Adam, for between the two is the 'second Adam' who is the Muhammadan Logos or Muhammadan Light *(Nur muhammadi)*, made up of fourteen entities of light. The meaning of the terms of Peripatetic hylomorphism is reversed: matter is light, being itself, existence. Form is quiddity, compassion, the shadowy dimension which fixes and defines this light. This is why matter is the father, the masculine aspect, while form is the mother or feminine aspect, and the 'imaginal Form' *(surah mithaliyah)* is the principle of individuation. Thus the *hadith* of the Sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq finds its justification: 'The believer is the brother of the believer because of their father and mother. Their father is the Light, their mother is Mercy.'

Shaykh Ahmad used the *hadith* of the holy Imams in the same creative way to construct the anthropology characteristic of his school. This anthropology leads to what could be called an 'alchemy of the body of resurrection'; it distinguishes between a twofold body of flesh *(jasad)*—a body of perishable flesh and a body of spiritual flesh *{caro spiritualis)* which is imperishable—and a twofold subtle body *(jism)*—an astral body and an essential, original archetypal body. All this corresponds point for point with the double *okhema* of the neo-Platonist Proclus. The modality of the body of resurrection {formed of the *jasad B* and the *jism B)* is described in conjunction with the alchemical operation, thus linking up with the teaching of Western esotericism. Finally, there is a doctrine characteristic of the Shaykhi school which its teacher designate as the 'Fourth Pillar'. This doctrine simply develops the teaching of the Imams: be in communion with all those who are 'Friends of God' *{awliya')*, and break with all those who are hostile towards them {in Persian, *tawallah o tabarrah)*. However, the idea of the 'Friends of God' involves the idea of the permanent esoteric hierarchy, and *eo ipso* the conditions which determine its existence in the present period of the occultation of the Imam. The occultation *(ghaybah)* of the Imam, the 'mystical pole' of the world, *eo ipso* implies the occultation of him who is the Threshold *(Bab)*, and thence of the entire hierarchy which leads up to him. When we

speak of this hierarchy in general, or of him who is its mouthpiece *(Natiq-i wahid)* from generation to generation, what is signified is a category of persons, but in no way does it imply that these persons can be manifested in public and designated individually. Their occultation is necessary: no one can pride himself on being one of them. They are known only to the Imam, whose last wish, expressed in his last letter, states that whoever publicly claims to have been invested by him is eo ipso guilty of imposture. The ghaybah cannot be broken before the coming of the Imam, as the masters of the Shaykhi school have been tireless in repeating. Thus, any religious movement, however interesting in itself, which breaks the *ghaybah* thereby breaks with Shiism, and consequently cannot claim to be of Shaykhi descent.

This is merely a brief allusion to the Shaykhi doctrines. It suggests that these doctrines are not within the grasp of the first comer, and that the discussion of them should never have descended to the market place. These objections have been made over and over again, but no one has paid any attention to the answers of the Shaykhis or taken the trouble to understand their terminology. Orientalists whose only model, perhaps, was the church of Rome, have written that Shaykh Ahmad was 'excommunicated' by the *mujtahids,* which is untrue. No *mujtahid* was involved in the altogether personal and ineffectual intrigue of Mulla Barghani at Qazvin, who had no power to introduce into Islam the concept of 'excommunication'. Among other things, Shaykh Ahmad wrote two long volumes of studies, on two important works by Mulla Sadra Shirazi. Surprised, distressed and helpless in the face of incomprehension, he asked one of his friends, Muhammad ibn Muqim ibn Sharif Mazandarani, during his second stay in Isfahan, to reply to the criticisms made against his commentary on *The Theosophy of the Throne (Hikmat 'arshiyah).* The work, which is unedited, deserves to be mentioned. We cannot say more here than that all this is in the process of being studied.

14. JA'FAR KASHFI

Special mention must also be made of this original thinker, who has a certain affinity with the Shaykhi school. His work is fully representative of the concerns of the metaphysician-theosophers in nineteenth-century Persia. Sayyid Ja'far Kashfi belonged to a family descended from the Seventh Imam, Musa Kazim (183/799). He **was** born at

Darabgard in Fars (Persia), lived all his life at Borujard and died in 1267/1850-1851; his work comprises about twelve titles, and is written in both Persian and Arabic. These are in the course of being studied. All we can mention here is his great work in Persian entitled *Tuhfat al-muluk (The Gift offered to the Sovereigns),* which was written at the request of a Qajar prince, son of Fath 'Ali-Shah, the Shah-Zadah Muhammad-Taqi Mirza. The work is in two volumes. The first of these is arranged in three books, concerned respectively with, firstly, the essence of the Intelligence *(aql,* the *Nous),* the first hypostasis, identified with the *Ruhmuhammadi,* the Muhammadan Holy Spirit; secondly, with the epiphanies *(mazahir)* of the Intelligence, and its relationship and points of contact with beings; and, thirdly, with the vestiges, effects, virtues and marks of the Intelligence. The second volume is a vast encyclopaedic systematization of speculative philosophy and historiosophy. The whole work is thus a Summa, and the fact that it is written in Persian makes it more significant still.

Ja'far Kashfi's system is based on the traditional Shiite text concerning the Intelligence, above all the *hadith* I and XIV of the 'Book of the Intelligence' in the great anthology of al-Kulayni (the *Kafi).* (1) At the beginning of beginnings, there is the imperative which charges the Intelligence to turn away from its Principle in order to turn towards created being, to 'descend into the world'. This movement gives rise to the exoteric aspect of the Intelligence, which corresponds to the prophetic mission *(nubuwah)* and to literal revelation *(tanzil).* (2) A second imperative commands it to turn again to its Principle. This movement of conversion 'bends' the exoteric aspect of the Intelligence back towards its esoteric aspect, which corresponds to the Imam's *walayah* or charisma and to the *ta'wil* which re-conduces the revealed letter to its hidden meaning, its spiritual archetype. The cognizability of any reality whatsoever presupposes the manifestation and cognizability of its opposite. The divine Essence has neither likeness nor opposite, and is unknowable. What is knowable of it to man's intellect is at the level of the initial theophany—that is to say, the theophany which is the Intelligence-Light and as such the Muhammadan Holy Spirit *(Ruh muhammadi),* the eternal Muhammadan Reality. The manifestation of this Intelligence-Light involves the manifestation of its opposite: shadow, darkness, ignorance, *agnosia.* This is not the shadow of the Intelligence, for a being of light has no shadow; it is

as though a wall is hidden in darkness, which at the rising of the sun manifests its shadow. Thus, the epiphany of being reveals non-being. This is not to say that non-being comes to be—anti-being cannot receive being. But negativity—the void—exists and is the antagonist of being, that is to say of Light.

Thus the metaphysical epic of the Intelligence is confronted by the counter-epic of its antagonist. Two universes descend and ascend to meet each other, effecting their intermixture on the level of the world of man, in the encounter between the 'sons of Light' and the 'sons of Darkness'. What is remarkable is that the tone of this metaphysic is determined by the same preoccupation that lies at the very origins of Iranian thought: the confrontation of Light and Darkness which is resolved by eschatology, the 'separation' which will be the task of the Twelfth Imam at the time of his coming, just as in Zoroastrianism it will be the task of the *Saoshyant.* The times of the conversion and the reversion of the Intelligence constitute the Ages of the world. The time of the *walayah* which succeeds the time of the *nubuwah* leads Ja'far Kashfi to construct a paracletic historiosophy whose periods can be brought into correspondence with each other, as we have already seen to be the case with the three reigns of historiosophy instituted by Joachim of Fiore. This is one of the high points of Shiite metaphysics. The work of the Iranian thinker, be it noted, is contemporary with the great metaphysical 'systems' which came into existence in the West during the first half of the nineteenth century.

15. THE SCHOOLS OF KHURASAN

(a) *Hadi Sabzavari and the school of Sabzavar*

The eminent figure of the 'Sage of Sabzavar' dominates the period which corresponds in Iran to the middle of our nineteenth century. He has been called 'the Plato of his time', and for good measure he is also said to be its Aristotle. In any case, he was for philosophy in the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar (1848-1896) what Mulla Sadra Shirazi had been in the reign of Shah 'Abbas the Great. He was also the faithful interpreter of Mulla Sadra and played a part in making him the 'master thinker' of the Iranian philosophers. It could even be said that circumstances permitted him, to a greater extent than Mulla Sadra, to give free rein to his genius as a mystical theosopher, because there was greater freedom of self-expression during the Safavid **epoch.**

Mulla Hadi Sabzavari was born in 1212/1797-1798 at Sabzavar, a small town in Khurasan between Shahrud and Nishapur in north-eastern Iran, where his father, Muhammad Mahdi Sabzavari, was a person of consequence. It was there that he received his first education, which he completed in Mashhad at the age of twenty. In 1232/1816-1817, wishing to go deeper into the study of philosophy, he went to Isfahan, which was still, in spite of its decline, the centre where the greatest teachers of the philosophical sciences and theology congregated. His teachers were Mulla Isma'il Isfahani and Mulla 'Ali ibn Jamshid Nuri (see above). After ten years he returned to Khurasan, where he taught for five years. He then went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He was absent for three years, after which he returned to Iran. He stayed for some time at Kirman, where he taught and where he married. Finally he settled once and for all in Sabzavar, which then became in its turn a centre for philosophical teaching and spirituality, visited by disciples from all over the world: from the Arabic countries, from the Caucasus and Azerbaijan, and from India. After a life of teaching and writing his many works, Mulla Hadi Sabzavari died in 1295/1878 (or according to some sources, in 1289-1290/1872-1873).

The originality of this thinker may be perceived above all in the personal tone of his writings, based principally on the work of Mulla Sadra Shirazi, on al-Suhrawardi's *Oriental Theosophy, and on the work* of Ibn al-'Arabi and the *hadith* and traditions of the Shiite Imams. Hadi Sabzavari is *par excellence* representative of the category of sages that al-Suhrawardi, in his prologue to the *Oriental Theosophy,* situates on the highest level: those who are masters both in speculative philosophy and in spiritual experience, who possess both exoteric knowledge and the highest esoteric knowledge. He is an *ishraqi* theosopher *par excellence.* This enables us to understand from the beginning the emotive impact of his teachings on certain of his followers. Hadi Sabzavari was equally at ease when dealing with the most difficult problems of the metaphysics of being in Mulla Sadra as when commentating the *Mathnawi of* Jalal al-Din Rumi. It was in this direction that the school of Sabzavar developed the teaching of Mulla Sadra. Hadi Sabzavari accepts the original priority of being, of 'existence', over quiddity, as he also accepts the transcendent unity of being, whose degrees of intensity or weakness determine the mode of being of the quiddities in the world of the pure Intelligences, in the *mundus*

imaginalis (*'alam al-mithal),* and in the physical world. He accepts the principle of intrasubstantial motion, which accounts for the metamorphoses of being and for the posthumous existence of the human being.

The master of Sabzavar left about thirty works. One of the most widely-read is the *Sharh-i manzumah.* Originally this is a piece in verse *(manzumah)* concerned with logic and philosophy. The author himself provides a commentary *(sharh)* which he packs with notes and observations. In the end, the work amounts to seven books: general metaphysics, a treatise on substance and accident, special metaphysics or philosophical theology *(ilahiyat),* physics, the philosophy of prophecy and Imamology, eschatology, morals and the science of custom. His pupils and their pupils meditated and studied this personal commentary extensively: Akhund Hidaji, Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi Amuli, Agha Mirza Mahdi Ashtiyani {d. 1372/1952-1953) worked on it to such a degree that it has now become a textbook for all students of traditional philosophy.

We will mention four great works which take the form of commentaries on the works of Mulla Sadra, but which in fact bring together the personal doctrines and teaching of Hadi Sabzavari. There is the commentary on the *Asfar* (the four spiritual journeys) which alone amounts to a concentrated work. There is the commentary on the *Shawahid al-rububiyah (The Witnesses of the divine Epiphanies),* on the *Kitab al-mabda' wa al-ma'ad(On the Origin and Return of Being),* and on the *Mafatih al-ghayb (The Keys of the Supra-sensible World).* These four commentaries form the Sabzavarian *corpus,* in which we may study the fruition of Mulla Sadra's thought, as well as the way in which the difficulties which it continues to raise are faced. Mulla Hadi also wrote a commentary on the most obscure or difficult sections in the six books of Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Mathnawi* {this entire work amounts to five hundred folio pages, in the lithographic edition which came out in Tehran in 1285/1868-1869). It would be utterly misleading to see in this a philosophical attempt to rationalize the parables of the mystics. Here again, in order to avoid any ambiguity with regard to the word 'philosophy', we should call it the work of an *ishraqi* metaphysician who is in the same position with respect to the rationalist philosophers as the metaphysic of Sufism with respect to the rationalist theologians of the *kalam.*

Another long work, *Asrar al-hikam (Secrets of Philosophy)* is devoted to the manifold questions concerned with the origins of being and eschatology, and explains the esoteric meaning of the liturgical practices. The author produced a summary of this work, entitled *Hidayat al-talibin (The Orientation of the Seekers),* at the request of Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, who went to visit him at Sabzavar. Like Mulla Sadra, Muhsin Fayd and Qadi Sa'id Qummi, the master of Sabzavar excelled at bringing out the theosophical teaching implicit in the Imamic texts. The great study on the divine Names *(Sharh-i Asma')* is in fact a commentary on a Shiite prayer. The divine Names {see Ibn al-'Arabi) possess both a cosmogonic and a liturgical function; by means of the latter they serve as instruments whereby a being can return to the *malakut and* to the Principle. Finally, mention must be made of a very important collection of sixteen treatises in Persian and Arabic, which was inspired by the questions of pupils or correspondents. We can only indicate here, together with the depth of these answers, the extreme interest of the questions, whose diversity enables us to understand the day-by-day preoccupations of Mulla Hadi Sabzavari's contemporaries.

In order to depict the fervour that then existed in the philosophical centre of Sabzavar, we must mention the names of some of the students who, as we have said, came from all quarters of Iran and elsewhere. Three of them have already been mentioned. They are to be found in their turn in the main teaching centres of traditional philosophy in Iran: Tehran, Tabriz, Qum, Isfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad. Unfortunately, the present state of research enables us to cite only the best-known of the names in question, for the collection of their works is far from complete. There was Mulla 'abd al-Karim Qutshani, who himself taught at Mashhad and wrote annotations on the *Sharh-i manzumah.* Shaykh 'Ali Fadi Tabbati" (Tibeti), whose name reveals his Tibetan origin, was highly esteemed by Hadi Sabzavari: one of the treatises in the 'collection of sixteen' mentioned above is a reply to a question put by him, and is a fine and subtle apologia for philosophical meditation in response to the alarms and doubts raised by the exotericists. Mirza 'Abbas Hakim Darabi Shirazi (d. 1300/1882-1883) also taught philosophy at Shiraz and had many followers. Mulla Kazim Khurasani (d. 1329/1911) was a perfect Shiite theosopher, professing that whoever does not possess sufficient knowledge of philosophy and metaphysics cannot understand

the *hadith* and the traditions of the holy Imams. Agha Mirza Muhammad Yazdi {Fadi Yazdi), after writing a reply to the criticisms addressed to Muhsin Fayd Kashani by Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i (see above) with regard to his *Treatise on Knowledge,* asked his teacher to take part in the matter; Hadi Sabzavari's reply is also to be found in the 'collection of sixteen treatises'. Mirza Sayyid Abu Talib Zinjani left among other things a book on the qualification of *Mujtahids {Ijtihad o taqlid),* the great question which divided the *usulis* and the *akhbaris in* the controversy mentioned above. Mulla Isma'il 'Arif Bujnurdi attended the lectures of Hadi Sabzavari when the latter was teaching at Mashhad. Mirza Husayn Sabzavari was a teacher at Tehran, where he was the colleague of the masters of the school of Tehran whom we spoke of above. His pupils were Mirza Ibrahim Zinjani, Akhund Hidaji (see above), and Mirza 'Ali Yazdi, who taught at the theological university of Qum.

(b) *The school of Mashhad*

Mashhad, the holy town of Khurasan where the sanctuary of the Eighth Imam 'Ali Rida (203/818) is preserved, a place of pilgrimage for all Shiites, possessed, from century to century, *madrasas in* which the teaching of the *hikmat ilahlyah* was represented. Here, however, we are concerned with it only as an extension of the impetus given to the intellectual and spiritual life of Khurasan by Hadi Sabzavari and his school. Two personalities in particular are worthy of mention: Agha Mirza Muhammad Saruqadi, who had studied philosophy at Sabzavar, and Mulla Ghulam Husayn (d. 1318/1900-1901), who was a pupil of Mulla Hadi Sabzavari for six years and then became the *Shaykh al-Islam* at Mashhad. These two masters were succeeded by two other masters who bestowed its character on what we here call the school of Mashhad. One of them was Hajji Fadi Khurasani (d. 1342/1923-1924), who taught for a long time at Mashhad and was a master of repute both in philosophy and in religious sciences (he was acknowledged as a *mujtahid).* The other was Agha Buzurg Hakim (d. 1355/1936-1937), also a teacher of philosophy at Mashhad in the tradition of Mulla Sadra. Unfortunately, the critiques of the exotericists, reawakening the perpetual inner drama of Shiism, forced him to renounce his teaching. His death left a void in the teaching of philosophy in Khurasan. These two eminent men had their followers,

among whom Agha Mirza Hasan Bujnurdi distinguished himself by his ability to bring together the canonical sciences and the philosophical sciences.

Here we arrive at an event of major importance for the intellectual life of Iran: the multiplication of Iranian universities with the encouragement of the reigning sovereign, Muhammad Rida Shah Pahlavi. Two of the State universities, Tehran and Mashhad, include faculties of theology whose role is not simply the creation of mullahs, but the wider dissemination of the Islamic sciences, including everything related to traditional philosophy. We will conclude this all too brief allusion to the school of Mashhad by mentioning the work of a young master of philosophy, a professor at the Faculty of Theology at the university of Mashhad, Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, whose orientation, activity and productivity we can indicate only by describing him as a Mulla Sadra *redivivus.* His work, which arises out of the traditional teaching of the masters cited above, is already considerable, comprising a long treatise on being from the metaphysical and mystical points of view; an extensive study on the prolegomena of Dawud al-Qaysari to the latter's commentary on Ibn al-'Arabi's Fusus, of which the first volume of seven hundred pages is a renewed and deeper representation of the related problems; several editions of texts, furnished with notes and observations of exceptional density, such as the edition of Langarudi's commentary on Mulla Sadra's *Kitab al-Masha'ir,* of Sadra's *Shawahid* with Sabzavari's commentary, of the 'sixteen treatises' mentioned above, and so on. Finally, there is the great and unprecedented undertaking, with which the present writer is associated with regard to the French section: an *Anthology of Iranian Philosophers from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day.* One volume has already appeared. In all there are to be five volumes, bringing to life the work of around forty Iranian thinkers. It is intended not as an assessment, but as a starting-point.

Perspective

The introduction to the great family of thinkers that we have here attempted to represent for the first time does not call for a conclusion. Indeed, we do not believe that traditional Islamic philosophy, and particularly the philosophy of the Shiite tradition, is a closed book. It is this traditional philosophy alone with which we have been concerned. The work of figures such as Muhammad Iqbal, for example, appears to us to belong to a different chapter of the history of philosophy. As for the future of traditional philosophy, we can speak of it only by diagnosing the dangers and hopes which lie in wait for it. We may perhaps point out that until air travel became widespread, Iran had remained very remote, and traditional philosophy was long preserved from destructive contacts. In any case, that time is over. Today, dangers and hopes have their origins both in the East and in the West.

On the Eastern side, there have been too many more or less reformist essayists who, having properly assimilated neither their own traditional philosophy nor the philosophies of the modern West, have written hasty syntheses whose good intentions are no compensation for their extremely dubious nature. Their work is the Eastern equivalent of the pseudo-esotericisms which abound in the West. Both merely serve to aggravate the confusion and the disorder. What it comes down to, briefly, is this: in the countries of Islam, there exists a category of intellectuals whose excessive Westernization, combined with the technological invasion, seems to have destroyed their traditional spiritual roots. On the other hand—and principally in Iran—there still exists a vast number of people of all ages who are qualified by their moral dignity and their intellectual education to represent their traditional spiritual culture. Unfortunately, very often these people who are in apositionto ensure the *traditio lampadis* know practically nothing about the great spiritual traditions of the West. There are the difficulties of language and vocabulary—the translations of philosophical texts are all too often done at second or third hand. The problem for the future is as follows: is philosophy merely the expression of the social conditions of a certain time and, if so, should so-called traditional philosophy

evaporate beneath the pressure of the social and political ideologies of the moment? Or does philosophy realize that its justification consists not in the agnosticism which has paralysed so many Western thinkers for generations, but in the preservation of the metaphysic without which it is at the mercy of every wind that blows? Metaphysics is not conditioned by social change but by the objective which it realizes—that is to say, the spiritual universes which it is the vocation of metaphysics to discover and examine.

It is from this point of view, perhaps, that we should take stock of the loss of that *mundus imaginalis* which was the concern of so many Islamic thinkers. Much has been said, rightly, about the Western impact which has wrecked the structures of traditional civilizations. Mention should also be made of what could counterbalance this. For the first time, after so many centuries, we have methods at our disposal which enable seekers in each of the three branches of the Abrahamic tradition to communicate with each other. Reciprocity must take the place of isolation, for only this tradition in its integrality can confront the colossal problems that we face today. But the lesson to be learned from our Islamic metaphysicians is that they never imagined that their esotericism—that is to say, their interiority was possible without a new inner birth. A *tradition* lives and transmits life only if it is a perpetual *rebirth.*